COOPERATION AND DOMINION

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AN ECONOMIC COMMENTARY ON ROMANS

GARY NORTH

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Cooperation and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Romans

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This book is dedicated to

Rev. Paul Sagan

who has moderated a congregation without factions

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface . . . . . *ix*

Introduction 1
1 Hierarchy (Rom. 1:1–5) 13
2 Reason, Social Utility, and Social Cooperation (Rom. 1:18–25) 16
3 The Work of the Law and Social Utility (Rom. 2:12–16) . . . 28
4 Imputation and the Laws of Economics (Rom. 3:30–31) . . . 44
5 Subordination and Deliverance (Rom. 8:19–22) 55
6 The Origin of Social Order (Rom. 8:28) 65
7 The Redemption of the Jews and Kingdom Blessings (Rom. 11:7–12) 82
8 The Whole of Our Lives (Rom. 12:1–12) 97
9 The Church as an Interdependent Body (Rom. 12:4–8) . . . 103
10 Coals of Fire (Rom. 12:17–21) 111
11 Legitimate Governments (Rom. 13:1–7) 118
12 Debt-Free Living (Rom. 13:8–10) 126
13 The Day (Not the Night) Is At Hand (Rom. 13:11–14) . . . 137
14 Christian Liberty (Rom. 14:1–6) 149

Conclusion 163

PREFACE

Seventeen centuries before Adam Smith wrote his famous passage about the division of labor in a pin factory, the Apostle Paul wrote the twelfth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. In that chapter, Paul described the church as a body. In order to function properly, a body must have members. Each member has a unique role to play in the body. Paul also pursued this theme in the twelfth chapter of First Corinthians. This is a defense of the idea of the division of labor, which was one of Smith's two fundamental analytical presuppositions, the other one being personal self-interest as the primary motivating factor in a free market.

Smith's discussion of the output of a pin factory (high) compared to the output of a highly skilled pin-maker (low) is probably the most famous passage in the history of economic thought. Paul's discussion of the church as an interdependent body is less familiar, despite the fact that we call church members *members*.

This commentary rests on Paul's concept of the division of labor in a covenantal setting: the institutional church. The free market is not a covenantal institution, for it is not created by a self-maledictory oath before God. Rather, it is the creation of voluntary agreements and contracts under law. With respect to the division of labor, the church is one model for the free market. The other model is the family. These are separate models. Paul did not discuss the church as an extension of the family, nor did he discuss the state as an extension of the family. These three covenantal institutions are separate. They are judged by separate standards.

With this as the background, let us begin a study of the Epistle to the Romans as a guideline for economics.

In this book, I refer to Paul as writing in the present tense in Romans. I refer to him as writing in the past tense whenever I am commenting on his Romans commentary. Adam Smith wrote this:

The division of labour, however, so far as it can be introduced, occasions, in every art, a proportionable increase of the productive powers of labour. The separation of different trades and employments from one another seems to have taken place in consequence of this advantage. This separation, too, is generally called furthest in those countries which enjoy the highest degree of industry and improvement; what is the work of one man in a rude state of society being generally that of several in an improved one. In every improved society, the farmer is generally nothing but a farmer; the manufacturer, nothing but a manufacturer. The labour, too, which is necessary to produce any one complete manufacture is almost always divided among a great number of hands. How many different trades are employed in each branch of the linen and woollen manufactures from the growers of the flax and the wool, to the bleachers and smoothers of the linen, or to the dyers and dressers of the cloth! The nature of agriculture, indeed, does not admit of so many subdivisions of labour, nor of so complete a separation of one business from another, as manufactures. It is impossible to separate so entirely the business of the grazier from that of the corn-farmer as the trade of the carpenter is commonly separated from that of the smith. The spinner is almost always a distinct person from the weaver; but the ploughman, the harrower, the sower of the seed, and the reaper of the corn, are often the same. The occasions for those different sorts of labour returning with the different seasons of the year, it is impossible that one man should be constantly employed in any one of them. This impossibility of making so complete and entire a separation of all the different branches of labour employed in agriculture is perhaps the reason why the improvement of the productive powers of labour in this art does not always keep pace with their improvement in manufactures.[1]

1. Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), ch. 1

INTRODUCTION

For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

ROMANS 10:12–13

A. Healing the Breach

The primary theme of Paul's epistle to the Romans is the relationship between Jews and Greeks, meaning God's Old Covenant people and His newly recruited New Covenant people. The church in Rome was to be a living example of this truth: there is no ecclesiastical difference between covenant-keeping Jews and covenant-keeping gentiles. They stand judicially before God equally.[1] This was a major theological and institutional issue in Paul's day because the Old Covenant was still in force. It ended in A.D. 70 with the destruction of the temple.[2]

The absence of covenantal differences between redeemed Jews and redeemed Greeks pointed to the healing of a breach that extended back to Abraham, a breach marked by confession and by a physical sign: circumcision. A new confession had replaced both Abraham's and the Greeks': "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (I Cor. 2:2). A new sign had replaced circumcision: baptism. This was the fulfillment of the promise made by God to Abraham, not its negation. God's promise to Abraham, that he would be a father of nations (*abraham*), had always been appropriated by Abraham and his heirs through faith, not law. Paul writes in this epistle:

1. William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of Paul's Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1982), p. 3.

2. David Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1987).

> And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised. For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect: Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression. Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were" (Rom. 4:12–17).

The church of Jesus Christ, grounded in saving faith, should therefore be an institution marked by cooperation between formerly divided confessional groups. The healing of this ancient breach, according to Paul, was intended by God to enable His church to experience the advantages of the division of labor (Rom. 12). Jews and Greeks together could build the church and thereby build the kingdom of God on earth and in history. They were told by Paul to cooperate with each other. The New Covenant church would soon completely replace the Old Covenant church, he taught. It would be stronger than its predecessor because it brings Jews and gentiles together in a joint effort.

B. The Position of the Jews

Jews and gentiles in the church were identified as covenant-keepers. They stood together judicially through their oath of allegiance to Christ and through the dual oath-signs of baptism and the Lord's Supper.[3]

1. Equal Footing?

This fact raised a crucial question: What of covenant-breaking Jews and covenant-breaking gentiles? Did they also stand equally before God? Clearly, they did not stand equally with covenant-keepers. They stood condemned. "What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after

3. Meredith G. Kline, *By Oath Consigned: A Reinterpretation of the Covenant Signs of Circumcision and Baptism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1968).

God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Rom. 3:9–12). But did they stand equally with each other, i.e., equally condemned?

This question raised a second question: Would covenant-breaking Jews and covenant-breaking gentiles stand before God in history equally condemned after the close of the transition era, which, in retrospect, we know ended in A.D. 70 with the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple? It is this question that Paul answers in Romans 11.[4] His answer is that a future era will arrive in which covenant-breaking Jews will, in large numbers, become covenant-keepers, joining the New Covenant church. This will mark the culmination of the era that Paul designated as the fulness of the gentiles.[5]

The church in Paul's day, as in ours, was an institution filled overwhelmingly with gentiles, and almost devoid of ex-Jews. "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins" (Rom. 11:25–27). This will not always be the case, Paul taught.

The difference between covenant-keepers and covenant-breakers is God's special grace. This has always been the difference. But during the transition era, special grace was not shown to large numbers of Jews. Nevertheless, they continued to believe that they were under God's special grace, and they had evidence to prove it: the law, the prophets, and the temple. Paul in Romans presents the case against them: not possessing special grace, they were outside the New Covenant, which is the only way to salvation. Peter had announced this same message to the Jews: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

2. The Jews' Delusion

Jews were suffering from a delusion, always Paul taught. They believed that they were God's permanently chosen people. They were in the process of losing this legal status. They were being progressively

4. John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1959, 1965), II, ch. XVII.

5. Chapter 7.

disinherited. God's final historical demonstration of this disinheritance came in A.D. 70, but the definitive announcement had already been made by Jesus. "Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. 21:43). The church, Paul teaches in Romans, is the true heir. "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" (Rom. 8:13–17).

Jesus had told the Jews that they were without excuse. "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only? Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" (John 5:43–47). Biblical law condemned them. "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:19–20).

C. Self-Knowledge and Common Grace

If a covenant-breaking man stands condemned before God, how does he know this? If he is eternally responsible before God because he has failed to meet God's standard, how does he know this? The Jews had God's written revelation. They knew. But what about the gentiles? Were they equally responsible? Are they still?

If gentiles are equally responsible, then how can God's revelation to them be unequal to the revelation that He gave to the Jews? How can gentiles be as responsible before God as covenant-breaking Jews are unless they have been given equal revelation? After all, as Jesus said: "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much re-

quired: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:48b).[6] If they are equally condemned, did they receive equal revelation? In other words, is general revelation equal in authority to special revelation?

1. Revelation

The Old Covenant was fading away in Paul's day. The period from Christ's ministry to the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 was a transition period. Jesus announced, "But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you" (Matt. 12:28). He was obviously inaugurating His kingdom during the earthly phase of His ministry. But a great transfer of the kingdom still lay ahead. In His final week, before His crucifixion, He told the chief priests and elders of the Jews: "Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. 21:43). This transfer began at Pentecost (Acts 2) and was completed in A.D. 70. In between was the period in which the gospels and the epistles were written. After centuries of silence, God had begun to speak authoritatively once again to certain individuals, who then wrote down what they had been told. This intervention had begun again with the ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus. The author of the epistle to the Hebrews called this transition period *these last days*. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds" (Heb. 1:1–2). This transition period closed in A.D. 70.[7]

The revelation given to the Jews was superior to anything given to the Greeks. The Jews had been given God's biblical law. "What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God" (Rom. 3:1–2). "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Rom. 7:12). The Jews of Paul's era had seen Jesus and heard His warnings. "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall

6. Gary North, *Treasure and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Luke*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 28.

7. Chilton, *Days of Vengeance*.

be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee" (Matt. 11:21–24). So, the gentiles were not under the same degree of responsibility as the Jews were. In the hierarchy of horrors throughout the eternal judgment, covenant-breaking Jews will be in worse shape than covenant-breaking gentiles.

2. Epistemology

In the first two chapters of Romans, Paul raises the question of epistemology: "What can men know, and how can they know it?" All men, not just Jews, are supposed to call upon the name of the Lord for their deliverance from sin and its effects. God requires this. But how can all men know that they must call upon God? In the first two chapters, Paul explains why: they are all condemned by God's revelation of Himself in nature. Some are also condemned by the written law of God: Jews. Others are condemned by the work of the law that is written in their hearts: Greeks. But all are condemned.

Men's initial knowledge of nature, including themselves, condemns them. This knowledge is the preparatory work of general revelation. It prepares all men for either their public condemnation at God's final judgment or their reception of saving grace in history. Their practical knowledge of God's law through general revelation carries with it a negative eternal sanction, but it also carries with it positive sanctions in history: blessings associated with law and order, meaning God's law and God's order. Without the restraining factor of common grace, there could be no history. Life would be a relentless war of all against all, as Thomas Hobbes wrote in *Leviathan* in 1650. This war would destroy the basis of human society through fallen mankind's total depravity run amok. God, in His grace, restrains this war by means of common grace.[8]

Men can know what God requires of them because they are made in God's image. *This image is the basis of the dominion covenant that binds everyone.* "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the

8. Gary North, *Dominion and Common Grace: God's Program for Victory* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987)

fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (Gen. 1:26–28).[9] Men know what God requires of them because God has made them both personally and corporately responsible to Him for the lawful administration of whatever God has placed under their authority.

Then what is the path of men's access to God's deliverance? Paul's answer: by hearing the word of God. "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:14–17). This is special revelation. General revelation condemns all mankind. Special revelation, whenever men are enabled to believe by God's special grace, redeems them.

D. Economics: Right and Left

What has all this got to do with economics? Paul's sections on epistemology help us to answer the epistemological questions of economics: "What can men know about economics, and how can they know it?"

The economist faces the same question that faces every social theorist: "Should I begin my investigation of the way the social world works with the assumption of the sovereign individual or the sovereign collective?" This is the question of the one and the many.[10] How can these be reconciled? Humanistic philosophers struggle with this question interminably. Christian philosophers can answer it by an appeal to the doctrine of the Trinity: the equal ultimacy of unity and plurality.[11]

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9. Gary North, *Sovereignty and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Genesis* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), chaps. 3, 4.

10. R. J. Rushdoony, *The One and the Many: Studies in the Philosophy of Order and Ultimacy* (Vallecito, California: Ross House, [1971] 2007).

11. This was one of Cornelius Van Til's themes. Cf. R. J. Rushdoony, *ibid*, ch. I:3.

In economics, the two theoretical extremes are laissez-faire individualism and socialism-communism. In my day, these two extremes have been personified by Murray Rothbard, an anarcho-capitalist, and . . . ? Who? Who has best defended the idea of pure socialism, in which all of the means of production are owned by the civil government? I can think of no one. There have been Marxist economists, such as Paul Sweezy and Paul Baran, but they have followed the lead of their master, Karl Marx. They have refused to spell out the details of how such an economy can work, either in practice or theory. If the government owns all of the means of production, most notably human beings, how can it allocate them rationally? How can central planners call forth men's best ideas, however risky these ideas may be to implement? How can state bureaucrats assess both the risk and the uncertainty of any project, rewarding entrepreneurs according to their contribution to the overall value of production? For that matter, how can the value of production be accurately estimated by anyone in a world without either free markets or free-market prices?

Oskar Lange attempted in the late 1930s to respond to Ludwig von Mises' critique of socialism. Mises had argued that the socialist economy is irrational because it has neither private ownership nor free-market prices. Without free markets, especially capital markets, no one knows the value of total production or any component of it.[12] To answer Mises, Lange relied on the idea of a central planning bureaucracy that would set all prices by trial and error, seeing which prices would "clear the market."[13] No Communist government ever tested his theory, including his beloved Poland, which appointed him Ambassador to the United States and then to the United Nations, beginning in 1945, after the Communist take-over. In 1949, he returned to Poland, where he obtained a minor academic post. He never was able to persuade the Polish government, or any government, to implement his theory. He never published a description of the institutional arrangements necessary to implement his theory. Yet from 1937 to 1991, economists who had heard of this debate—very few—usually

12. Ludwig von Mises, "Economic Calculation in a Socialist Commonwealth" (1920), in F. A. Hayek (ed.), *Collectivist Economic Planning* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, [1935] 1963). A new translation appears on the website of the Ludwig von Mises Institute, located in Auburn, Alabama.

13. Oskar Lange, *On the Economic Theory of Socialism* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964). This is a reprint of Lange's articles that appeared in the Review of *Economic Studies*, IV (1936–37). The book also contains Fred M. Taylor's essay, "The Guidance of Production in a Socialist State," which was published originally in the *American Economic Review*, XIX (1929).

dismissed Mises with a brief remark that "Lange completely refuted Mises." It was only after the collapse of the Soviet Union that Mises got even a minor hearing among academic economists. Only one major economist, the millionaire socialist Robert Heilbroner, publicly admitted the truth: "Mises was right."[14]

The existence of prices implies the existence of money. It also implies the ideal of customer choice—a most unsocialistic idea. What kind of monetary system would be consistent with the government's complete ownership of the means of production? This question was never answered by any Communist Party economist, either in theory or practice. Finally, in late 1991, the Soviet Union collapsed politically, mimicking its moribund economy, without theoretical or practical answers ever having been offered by its defenders. Like the Soviet Union's publishing of the complete works of Marx and Engels in English, the experiment failed before the project was completed.

Most economists are somewhere in between anarcho-capitalism and full communism, just as most social theorists are somewhere in between radical individualism and radical collectivism. But merely being in between two extremes is not an epistemologically coherent position unless the theorist has offered a way to reconcile the two extremes in a consistent, comprehensive system of interpretation, which none of them ever has, or if he has, no one else believes him and follows him.[15] An academic defender of the mixed economy should be able to present a theoretical case for the system. But economists generally shy away from presenting a theoretical case for the mixed economy, as opposed to supposedly practical, *ad hoc* defenses of this or that intervention by the state. Economic theory today has become an arcane mixture of statistical data, abstract mathematical theorems, and ever-popular *ceteris paribus* ("other things being equal") assumptions. But, in the real world, nothing remains constant—a fact noted long ago by the Greek philosopher Heraclitus.

Paul's case for men's universal knowledge of God (Rom. 1:18–22)[16] and the work of God's law written on every heart (Rom. 2:14–15)[17] provides the basis of a systematically biblical, self-consciously Christian epistemology. Here is the basis of shared knowledge, which

14. Robert Heilbroner, "After Communism," *The New Yorker* (Sept. 10, 1990), p. 92.

15. Of course, there is the problem raised by Kurt Gödel's bothersome theorem: no system can be both internally consistent and complete, i.e., autonomous. But that is for philosophers to contend with.

16. Chapter 2.

17. Chapter 3.

in turn makes possible the development of a covenantal theory of knowledge that integrates the idea of individual knowledge with the idea of shared knowledge. *The Christian theorist should begin with the image of God in man as the foundation of social theory*. He need not despair about not being able to move logically from individual knowledge and decisions to shared knowledge, which in turn makes corporate policy-making theoretically compatible with individual valuations. Men are not autonomous. They are not autonomous evaluators. They are members of multiple corporate entities that are responsible before God and whose decision-makers can and must act as God's lawful representatives.

E. The Division of Labor

Adam Smith began *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) with a discussion of the economic benefits of the division of labor. This set the pattern for economic analysis ever since. It would have been better if he had begun with a consideration of private ownership,[18] but the question of ownership raises the question of God, who as the creator established His legal title to the creation. Smith was trying to avoid theological issues in *The Wealth of Nations*. The issue of the division of labor seemed less theological, more universal, as indeed it is. But it does not get to the heart of the supreme economic question: Who owns this?

The division of labor is the issue of cooperation. Smith argued that personal wealth is increased through economic cooperation: voluntary exchange. So is national wealth. He recommended the abolition of civil laws that restrain trade. Trade increases the participants' wealth, and the nation's wealth, too. This was the great insight of Smith's book.[19] Economists have been debating this issue ever since. So have politicians.

Trade is based, Smith said, on mutual economic self-interest. But trade assumes a common universe of discourse: common understanding and perception. How does this common universe of discourse come into existence? Its existence is not self-evident. This is the issue of epistemology. It is this issue that Romans answers.

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18. Tom Bethell, *The Noblest Triumph: Property and Prosperity through the Ages* (New York: St. Martin's, 1998), ch. 7: "The Economists' Oversight."

19. Gary North, *Hierarchy and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on First Timothy*, 2nd ed.(Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2001] 2012), Appendix C.

Conclusion

The epistle to the Romans deals with the issue of the traditional division between Jews and Greeks. It is concerned with healing divisions between groups of covenant-keepers. In discussing the basis of this healing, Paul provides answers to the wider social issues of knowledge, trade, and economic cooperation.

The epistle to the Romans is generally known as a book about grace. Indeed, it is the premier book in the Bible on grace. But it is a book about common grace as well as special grace. It raises the question of how God's general revelation to mankind serves only to condemn them all, but saves no one. This general revelation of God is held back in unrighteousness by Jew and gentile alike (Rom. 1:18–22).[20] It is this active, willful suppression of the truth of God that God's special grace overcomes. This general revelation of what God requires of every person also condemns them, for all of them disobey the revelation that God has given to them regarding His law (Rom. 2:14–15).[21] This condemnation is also overcome by special grace. "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).

Because the epistle to the Romans is about common grace, it is about cooperation. Covenant-breakers can cooperate with covenant-keepers because of common grace in history. Because Romans is about special grace, it is about cooperation: Jews with Greeks in the church. Paul's imagery of the church as a body in chapter 12 can also be used to describe the functioning of a free market economy. It is less a great machine than a great organism.

The doctrine of common grace has been misused by theologians who have defended a doctrine of common ground that is based on natural law theory. They have argued that civil government can and must rest on natural law, for otherwise there is no third way in between (1) the rule of covenant-breakers at the expense of covenant-keepers and (2) theocracy. They perceive that the first alternative produces tyranny, but they are equally convinced that the second alternative also produces tyranny. They seek liberty in a third way: natural law theory. This they equate with common grace.

The problem with such a perspective is found in Paul's epistle to the Romans. Paul teaches that covenant-breakers actively suppress the truth which God has given to them in natural revelation. Only to

20. Chapter 2.
21. Chapter 23

the extent that covenant-breakers are inconsistent with what they believe about God, man, law, sanctions, and time can they become productive. There is no common ground system of law, civil or otherwise, which both sides can logically prove and affirm. Only when one side or the other is inconsistent with its first principles can there be cooperation. God, through His common grace, restricts covenant-breakers from becoming consistent with their first principles. This protects His people from either extermination at the hands of covenant-breaking tyrants or from the collapse of productivity which would result if covenant-keepers acted consistently with their presuppositions, i.e., a vast contraction of the division of labor.

1

HIERARCHY

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead: By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name.

ROMANS 1:1–5

The theocentric focus of this passage is God's hierarchy: point two of the biblical covenant.[1] God appointed of Paul to represent the Son of God. Paul comes to the church at Rome as an official agent of God.

A. Who Is in Charge?

God is in charge. It is only on this judicial-covenantal basis that Paul asserts His authority. God had separated him for service to Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Paul brings the good news (gospel) of Christ to Rome. He does so as a slave or servant of Christ: the Greek word is the same.

Who is Jesus Christ? He is the Son of God and also the heir of David. Christ's authority in the flesh has to do with judicial inheritance in the kingly line of David. But there was another aspect of Christ's authority: His resurrection from the dead. It was this triumph over the curse imposed by God on Adam that marked Christ as both holy

1. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1987] 1992), ch. 2. Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory*, 5th ed. (Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision, [1980] 2010), ch. 2.

and powerful. His resurrection declared who He was. He is our Lord, Paul says—"Jesus Christ, the Lord of us" (v. 4), which for some reason, the King James translators ignored.[2]

Paul says that God has delegated to Paul apostolic authority. (He says "we," but he can hardly mean that every Christian is an apostle.) God has called His people to obey the faith in all nations on behalf of Christ's name. This is the doctrine of *judicial representation*, which is associated with point two of the biblical covenant model, which in turn has to do with hierarchy.[3]

Paul here is establishing his own authority as God's spokesman in the church. He is also establishing the authority of the church's members to serve as spokesmen for Christ in the nations. "Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ; To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ" (vv. 6–7).

This epistle deals with cooperation among the saints. Chapter 12 is the primary chapter dealing with this theme, but it is found throughout the epistle. In order to establish the institutional and legal framework for such cooperation, Paul begins with the doctrine of hierarchy. There is a hierarchical chain of command in the church: God > Christ > Paul > the members. The theme of hierarchy is pursued in greater detail in Paul's first epistle to Timothy.[4]

Cooperation within the church is both covenantal and hierarchical. I call this vertical hierarchy. The kind of economic cooperation that is described by Adam Smith in *The Wealth of Nations* is horizontal.[5] It is cooperation by contract or agreement under civil law. The cooperation that Paul describes in this epistle is ecclesiastical: under the church, not under civil law. It is cooperation among a group of holy people: separated by God for His special work. This requires, he says, "obedience to the faith." Economic exchange requires obedience to civil law and market custom, but not obedience to the faith.

B. Insiders and Outsiders

To be inside is necessarily to be separated from the outside. This is the issue of *boundaries*: point three of the biblical covenant. The church

2. The phrase appears in the Greek textus receptus and the other standard texts.

3. Gary North, *Authority and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Exodus* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), Part 1, *Representation and Dominion* (1985).

4. Gary North, *Hierarchy and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on First Timothy*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2001] 2012).

5. *Ibid*., Introduction.

at Rome was separated from the world, yet it was in the world. Paul deals here with the calling of the Christian to *represent* God in the world: point two of the biblical covenant.

The spirit of holiness is the spirit of separation. Holiness is an ethical boundary that separates those serving God by His call from those who have not received the call or who have not responded to it in faith. "So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen" (Matt. 20:16).[6]

The division between those inside the circle and those outside has been described as *brotherhood vs. otherhood*. There is no doubt that Paul had something like this in mind in this epistle. This epistle is about God's grace to mankind: special (saving) grace in both history and eternity and common (healing) grace in history.[7] God is the source of both forms of grace.

The distinction between insiders and outsiders has to do with Christ. Separation from the world is required for servants of Christ. Yet service in the world is also required. Covenant-keepers are in the world but not of the world. They are representatives of another world that has outposts in this world. Their service is supposed to reflect their dual citizenship. "For our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:20).

Conclusion

Paul here establishes his authority as an apostle by means of a discussion of a vertical hierarchy. He represents Christ. So do the members of the church at Rome. The community has been set apart from the world by God. Members of the church are supposed to be obedient to the faith. This is a matter of subordination to God and men.

6. Gary North, *Priorities and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Matthew*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 40.

7. Gary North, *Dominion and Common Grace: The Biblical Basis of Progress* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987).

2

REASON, SOCIAL UTILITY, AND SOCIAL COOPERATION

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

ROMANS 1:18–25

The theocentric issue of this passage is God as the Creator and Sustainer of life: Point one of the biblical covenant.[1] The secondary issue is man as the image of God: point two.[2] The philosophical question raised by this passage is the question of the common knowledge of God by all men: knowledge sufficient to condemn every man for rebellion.

A. Active Suppression of the Truth

We are told here that covenant-breaking men reject the clear knowledge of God as Creator that is presented in nature. The Greek word

1. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1987] 1992), ch. 1. Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory*, 5th ed. (Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision, [1980] 2010), ch. 1.
2. Sutton, ch. 2. North, ch. 2.

translated here as "hold" sometimes has the connotation of "hold back" or "suppress."[3] This implies an active suppression of the truth.

Covenant-breakers worship aspects of the creation. Some of them worship images of corruptible man. Others worship beasts. None of them worships the Creator God of the Bible, who created the world out of nothing by His command. To worship the Creator, Paul says in this and other epistles, fallen men must receive special grace from God. Those who have not received it are God's enemies. Their god is their belly (Rom. 16:17–18; Phil. 3:17–19). So, what may seem initially to be a case of mistaken Divine identity is in fact an act of willful rebellion. God holds men responsible for their active suppression of the truth, for holding it back in unrighteousness. If there were no image of God in men, they would not be held accountable by God. It is the common image of God in all men that leads to God's condemnation of unregenerate men.

This passage teaches that there is a common humanity. Every human being is defined by God in terms of his creaturely legal status as God's image. "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth" (Gen. 1:26).[4] This fact serves as the foundation of a distinctly biblical social philosophy, including economics—a social philosophy that offers a way out of the dilemma of individualism vs. collectivism.

B. Epistemology: From Individualism to Collectivism

"What can a man know, and how can he know it?" This is the two-part question raised by epistemology. This question is basic to every system of philosophy.

Socrates began with a command: "Know thyself." From Plato, we learn that this phrase appeared on a wall inside the temple of Delphi (*Alcibiades* 1.129a). In sharp contrast, the Bible begins with an account of God's creation of the world: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). The Bible is theocentric. Greek

3. John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1959, 1965), II, p. 37. Murray cites this passage: "And now ye know what **withholdeth** that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way" (II Thess. 2:6–7).

4. Gary North, *Sovereignty and Dominion: An Economic Commentary of Genesis* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), ch. 3.

philosophy was anthropocentric. Western philosophy has followed the Greeks in this regard. It begins with the individual and what he can know about himself.

Modern economics also begins with the individual. This has been true ever since the epistemological revolution of the early 1870s, which is also called the marginalist revolution.[5] This intellectual revolution formally abandoned the concept of objective economic value, which had dominated classical economics for a century. It substituted individual valuation. Prices are objective, but the individual value scales that underlie market competition are not. A price in money is an objective result of competitive bids by would-be owners, including existing owners who want to retain ownership at prices lower than some subjectively imposed threshold. These bids are based on subjective scales of value that cannot be compared scientifically with each other because there is no objective measure of subjective utility. This is the heart of modern economics' epistemological dilemma. It arises from the starting point: the individual. Methodological individualism creates a series of unsolvable epistemologcal dilemmas.[6]

1. Crusoe and Friday

A standard approach to teaching economics today is to begin with a discussion of a single decision-maker, usually called Robinson Crusoe. This pedagogical approach is consistent with Adam Smith's decision to begin *The Wealth of Nations* with a discussion of the division of labor. After discussing Crusoe's plans and actions, the author adds another decision-maker to his narrative, usually called Friday. The economist adopts this approach in order to discuss the added productivity provided by an increase in the division of labor. He seeks to prove that total utility increases when two people enter into a voluntary exchange. Each person benefits, or else he would not make the exchange. Through an increase in the division of labor, the value of total economic output increases more than the cost of the resource inputs, including labor.

The epistemological problem is this: How can we define "total value" scientifically? We have moved from a discussion of the indi-

5. The pioneers, writing independently, were William Stanley Jevons (England), Leon Walras (Switzerland), and Carl Menger (Austria).

6. Gary North, *Sovereignty and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Genesis* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1982] 2012), ch. 4; Gary North, *Hierarchy and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on First Timothy*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2001] 2012), Appendix B.

vidual actor to a discussion of society. When we begin our economic analysis with the sovereign individual, and then move to the idea of a society made up of equally sovereign individuals, we encounter a philosophical problem: How can we maintain the initial autonomy/sovereignty of each individual and also defend the concept of collective value? An individual has a value scale. This is regarded by humanistic economists as an aspect of his sovereignty over himself: he decides for himself in terms of his own values. There is no value scale for a collective unless this collective also partakes in sovereignty, i.e., its ability to decide collectively what is good for the collective. How can we move logically from an analytical system based exclusively on individual sovereignty to an analytical system based on social sovereignty, which requires the surrender of some portion of individual sovereignty?

We can begin to understand this epistemological problem by asking a series of questions. How can an individual surrender a portion of his legal sovereignty and still remain the same individual? How much legal sovereignty can be surrendered to society before the individual loses so much of his original sovereignty that he can no longer be considered a legally sovereign individual? How can an analytical system that begins with the legally sovereign individual be maintained theoretically when individuals surrender any of their sovereignty to a collective? Do the analytical tools of individualism apply to collectives? If so, how? Can this be proven in terms of the logic of individualism?

The economist must also prove that social cooperation is based on a shared perception of the way the world works. How does sovereign economic actor A know that sovereign economic actor B understands the world in the same way that he does, or at least a similar way? How does he gain the cooperation of the other person? What appeal for cooperation will work? Why will it work? Would another type of appeal work even better, i.e., gain cooperation at a lower price? Even to begin considering strategies of persuasion, the economic decision-maker must make assumptions regarding a common mode of discourse. He has to assume that the other person will understand his own personal self-interest. The first person must also assume that he can understand enough about the other person's understanding so that he can make intellectual contact. There must be a shared perception of the world before there can be shared discourse.

The difficulty for economists who attempt to make a plausible

claim for economics as a science is that *this crucial assumption of shared perception has yet to be proven*, either by economists or philosophers. More than this: it must be proven in terms of the individualistic presuppositions of economics. Beginning with the assumption of the fully autonomous individual, the economist must then bring other equally autonomous individuals into the epistemological castle of common perception. To do this, he must let down the drawbridge of objective truth. But the moment that he lets down this drawbridge, his assertion of pure subjectivism is compromised. In fact, it is destroyed. There has to be an objective perception that unifies the free market's participants in order to gain their cooperation.

This epistemological problem becomes a major problem in establishing state-enforceable rules that govern voluntary exchange. The moment that an economist defends any policy of civil government in terms of increased common benefits, he abandons individualism. This is because of the nature of civil law. A civil government threatens negative sanctions against those who violate the law. If this threat of coercion were not necessary to influence human action, then civil government would not be needed.

To tell an individual that he is not allowed to do something that he wants to do is to reduce his personal utility. So, in order to justify the imposition of force, the policy's defender must argue that the protesting individual's loss of utility is not sufficient to offset the increase in utility for other members of society. The economist, in his role as a policy advisor, has to assume that social utility will increase as a result of his recommendation, even though one person's utility will decrease. So, he has to make assumptions about additions to and subtractions from social utility. He has to assume that a *common value scale* exists and that he, as a scientist, can recognize it and apply it to historical situations.

2. Social Utility

How can the defender of free market economics prove his case scientifically? He must invoke a conceptual aggregate: social utility. Does this aggregate actually exist? If it does, how can it be discovered? There is no known objective measure of personal utility. Then how can men discover a common scale of utility? But without a common scale of utility, there is no way to measure increases or decreases in social utility. There is no way to measure an increase or decrease in individual utility, either. No one can demonstrate that he has in-

creased his personal utility by exactly this much. The most that he can legitimately claim is that at this moment, he believes that his new condition has improved. There is no objective unit of measurement that tells him *by how much* his subjective condition has improved.

If an objective unit of measurement does not exist for the individual, then the epistemological individualist cannot logically assume that it exists for society. *For a strict methodological individualist, there is no way that he can consistently defend the existence of social utility. He cannot prove its existence, even though he assumes its existence*. He cannot logically move from personal utility to social utility. *To defend logically the existence of social utility, he must first surrender his defense of epistemological individualism*. He must adopt some degree of epistemological corporatism. He now faces that age-old question: "How much is too much?" For this question, there has never been a widely agreed-upon answer.

C. Methodological Covenantalism

Long before the social science of economics was developed, and centuries before Socrates, Solomon wrote: "Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken" (Eccl. 4:9–12).[7] Long before Solomon, the story of the tower of Babel made the same point. "And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city" (Gen. 11:6–8).[8]

The truth of the superiority of the division of labor does not rest on the subjective assessment of any man or group of men. In order to justify the concept of the division of labor, we do not have to assume the existence of a common scale of subjective values among all men, a concept which is inconsistent with methodological individualism.

7. Gary North, *Autonomy and Stagnation: An Economic Commentary on Ecclesiastes* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), ch. 14.

8. North, *Sovereignty and Dominion*, ch. 19.

The objective superiority of the division of labor does not rest on the subjective assessments of a multitude of individuals, whose subjective assessments may be inconsistent with each other. Instead, it rests on the biblical doctrine of God.

First, God is a sovereign person who brings judgments in history. Second, man is God's vassal, made in God's image. He is required by God to worship God. Third, obedience to God's laws is an aspect of proper worship. When men choose to worship other gods, they break God's law. Fourth, disobedience to God brings men under God's negative sanctions. Paul writes: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness" (v. 18).

1. Protestant Social Theory

Christian social theory must begin with methodological covenantalism, not methodological individualism or methodological collectivism.[9] Protestant covenantalism usually begins with implied covenants among the three persons of the Trinity. There is no explicit biblical revelation that any three-way intra-Divine agreements took place before time began. These agrrements' existence is deduced from revelation regarding the relationship between God and mankind. The covenant of salvation is one of these assumed pre-historic covenants. Paul elsewhere wrote: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved" (Eph. 1:3–6). This covenant of salvation includes the good works that are its outgrowth. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:8–10).

Protestant covenantalism moves from implied, pre-temporal, in-

9. In the field of philosophy, this means that Christians must begin with covenantalism, not nominalism or realism. In the theology of the sacraments, this means that Christians must begin with covenantalism, not memorialism or the doctrine of the real presence. God is judicially present in the sacraments, not bodily present.

tra-Divine covenants to the idea of formal legal agreements in history between man and God and also among men under God. For these events, there is abundant evidence, beginning with Genesis 1:26–28. "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."[10] This is the dominion covenant. It defines mankind. The Bible's four additional oath-bound covenants—individual, church, family, civil—are the epistemological foundations of any biblical social philosophy, including economics. Without a covenantal foundation, Christian social theory becomes a mixture of the Bible and natural law theory or some other form of humanistic rationalism.

The terms of God's covenant with all mankind are these: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me" (Ex. 20:3–5).[11] We know that these terms bind all mankind, because Paul in Romans 1 identifies men's violation of these laws as sinful. There is no record of Adam's having formally agreed to this covenant, but such an agreement is implied by God's original command to Adam to subdue the earth. God brought the Flood on mankind because of men's rebellion against Him. "And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have

10. North, *Sovereignty and Dominion*, ch. 3.

11. Gary North, *Authority and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Exodus* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), Part 2, *Decalogue and Dominion* (1986), ch. 22.

made them. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD" (Gen. 6:5–8) God re-confirmed the Adamic covenant with Noah. "And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered. Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things" (Gen. 9:1–3).[12] This was an act of covenant renewal between God and man.

2. Assumptions

Methodological covenantalism assumes the following. First, a covenant is *judicially objective*. It is established by formal words or rituals that are judicially objective. It involves laws that are judicially objective. The covenant's ratifying oath invokes objective sanctions by God, should the oath-taker violate the terms of the covenant. A covenant extends over time, binding judicially the past, present, and future. Second, a covenant is *perceptually subjective*. God imputes meaning to it. God is a person. Men can understand the terms of a covenant because God understands it and defines it, and men are made in God's image.

God's imputation of meaning is central to the biblical concept of historical objectivity. Moment by moment, He subjectively declares the objective truth or falsity of any subjective interpretation by a man. God is the source of the meaning of history. He is omniscient, so He can accurately assess the importance and effects of any event. This Divine objectivity undergirds all historical interpretation. There is an objective standard against which every subjective interpretation is measured by God.

This objectivity in history makes it possible for men, who are all made in the image of God, to approach questions of social utility with a legitimate hope of solving them. Their knowledge of the truth testifies to them. God's original objectivity offers men a way to gain social benefits by placing civil sanctions on anti-social behavior, but without sacrificing the ideal of liberty.

When liberty is based exclusively on an ethical theory of pure individualism, any imposition of civil sanctions undermines the theory and opens the door to tyranny. Pure individualism denies that social

12. North, *Sovereignty and Dominion*, ch. 18.

justice is possible, because of the absence of an objective common scale of ethical values. But the Bible tells us that there is a common ethical core that unites all men, even though its existence produces rebellion in covenant-breakers as they become more consistent in their defiance of God. *Because men are all made in God's image, there is a shared outlook that enables them to come to agreements on social policy*. There is no unanimity. There will not be unanimity, given the fact of men's sin, but there is an inescapable knowledge of God at the core of man's perception. It condemns covenant-breaking men.

Without a doctrine of God's common grace,[13] i.e., God's *restraining grace*, men could not gain agreement regarding which behavior is subject to civil sanctions. If covenant-breaking men were allowed by God to become fully consistent with their presuppositions regarding God, man, law, sanctions, and the future, there would be a complete loss of social order. This is why God intervened at Babel. God restrains evil. This is grace—an unearned gift from God.

Conclusion

Paul teaches here that men actively rebel against the truth of God. They know God. "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (v. 20). They actively suppress this truth, which nature provides. This includes the nature of man. The image of God in man is basic to man's personality. He cannot escape this objective testimony, no matter how much he suppresses it. It condemns him before God.

Man's rebellion is shaped by objective truth. He worships aspects of the creation, but he does worship. He subordinates himself to something, even though the object of his worship is not God. The pattern of his rebellion reflects the covenantal structure of man and his institutions. There are institutional hierarchies in life (Rom. 13:1–7).[14] The common knowledge of God makes possible men's pursuit of freedom and justice through the imposition of civil sanctions. Even though there is no common scale of ethical values that enables men to quantify social benefits, men can come to God-honoring, blessing-generating decisions to suppress by force certain forms of evil public behavior. "For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to

13. Gary North, *Dominion and Common Grace: The Biblical Basis of Progress* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987).

14. Chapter 11.

the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake" (Rom. 13:3–5).

Men's natural reason is not reliable for the proper worship of God. This is Paul's message in this passage. Men suppress the truth in unrighteousness. The insufficiency of natural reason is why all men need the revelation found in the Bible regarding God, man, law, sanctions, and the future. They need biblical revelation to correct covenant-breaking man's misleading interpretations of natural revelation. This is why God required Israel to meet once every seven years to hear the written law of God preached publicly.

> And Moses wrote this law, and delivered it unto the priests the sons of Levi, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and unto all the elders of Israel. And Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, When all Israel is come to appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the LORD your God, and observe to do all the words of this law: And that their children, which have not known any thing, may hear, and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it (Deut. 31:9–13).[15]

This was in addition to the preaching of the law locally by the Levites.

Paul in this section teaches that all men possess objective knowledge of God. Nature objectively testifies to this objective God. Covenant-breaking men subjectively suppress this objective knowledge. It is not simply that all men know that God exists; they know what He expects of them, too.

If all knowledge is subjective, and solely subjective, then the familiar modern slogan, "do your own thing," must become "think your own thing." When it does, what happens to communications, i.e., to the foundations of social order? This is the epistemological dilemma of methodological individualism, which is pure subjectivism. When this

15. .Gary North, *Inheritance and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Deuteronomy*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1999] 2012), ch. 75.

purity surrenders to objective truth, in whatever form or to whatever degree, so does methodological individualism. What will replace it?

3

THE WORK OF THE LAW AND SOCIAL UTILITY

> *For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;) In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.*
>
> ROMANS 2:12–16

The theocentric basis of this passage is the image of God in man: point two of the biblical covenant.[1] At the core of every man's being, his conscience testifies to the existence of God and His law. Men are therefore without excuse when they rebel against God by breaking His law.

A. Conscience

Romans 1:18–22 describes the nature of man's rebellion: worshipping the creation rather than the Creator. In Romans 2, we learn about the consequences of this rebellion.

> Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. And think-

1. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1987] 1992), ch. 2. Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory*, 5th ed. (Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision, [1980] 2010), ch. 2.

> est thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: For there is no respect of persons with God (Rom. 2:1–11).

Covenant-breaking men will be condemned by God on the day of final judgment, but they will not arrive before the judgment seat of God without any warning from God in history. Nature testifies daily to the existence of the Creator God of the Bible. Men's hearts also testify to them about the specifics of the law of God. Men actively rebel against the truth, Paul writes. For this rebellion, they will be condemned. Some of them will have been without God's written law; others will have been under the covenantal terms of this law and condemned by it. "For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law" (v. 12). Paul is here building a judicial case for every person's need of saving grace. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). Without saving grace, he says, every person will perish: those covenantally under biblical law and those not under biblical law.

1. The Work of the Law

Paul says that the *work* of the law is written on the heart of every person. He does not say that the law of God is written in every man's heart. This latter ethical condition is an aspect of regeneration, i.e., an aspect of special grace. The prophet Jeremiah prophesied regarding a new covenant which would be written on the hearts of God's people.

> Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they

> brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more (Jer. 31:31–34).

This has been fulfilled by the New Covenant of Jesus Christ. At the time of a person's regeneration, he becomes the recipient of this promised blessing. The law of God is at that point in time written on his heart definitively. We read in the Epistle to the Hebrews:

> For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away (Heb. 8:8–13).

> Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more (Heb. 10:15–17).

This is not what Paul is speaking about in Romans 2. What Paul describes in Romans 2 is God's common grace of the human conscience, which leads to a common condemnation by God at the final judgment. Paul says that the work of the law, not the law itself, is written on every man's heart. Men's consciences testify as witnesses to the existence of the work of the law.[2] Men know by conscience what they are not supposed to do outwardly. They know which acts are condemned by God. They know, but they do not always obey.

2. John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1959, 1965), I, p. 75.

2. Knowledge of the Law

How is the knowledge of the work of God's law different from the knowledge of the law itself? Paul does not say. We know from Jeremiah and the Epistle to the Hebrews that having the law of God written in covenant-keeping men's hearts is the fulfillment of prophecy. This is not a universal condition of mankind. Paul says here that having the work of the law written in the heart is the common condition of mankind. There has to be a distinction between these two forms of legal knowledge, but this text does not identify what the distinction is. Cornelius Van Til, the Calvinist philosopher, wrote:

> It is true that they have the law written in their hearts. Their own make-up as image-bearers of God tells them, as it were, in the imperative voice, that they must act as such. All of God's revelation to man is law to man. But here we deal with man's response as an ethical being to this revelation of God. All men, says Paul, to some extent, do the works of the law. He says that they have the works of the law written in their hearts. Without a true motive, without a true purpose, they may still do that which externally appears as acts of obedience to God's law. God continues to press his demands upon man, and man is good "after a fashion" just as he knows "after a fashion."[3]

Some people never know about God's Bible-revealed law. Paul says, "For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law." They will perish. Why? If they have no knowledge of God's law, then why does God hold them responsible for having broken His law? Paul's answer: because they are not without knowledge of the work of the law, and this knowledge is sufficient to condemn them. Everyone possesses this knowledge in his or her nature as God's image. "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves" (v. 14).[4]

B. Covenant

When Paul speaks of "their conscience also bearing witness" (v. 15), he has in mind the inescapability of the terms of God's covenant, for mankind is God's image-bearer. Man in Adam is required to exercise dominion in God's name and by His authority (Gen. 1:27–28),[5] a cov-

3. Van Til, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology*, Vol. V of *In Defense of the Faith* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1978), p. 105.

4. Murray, *Romans*, I, p. 73.

5. Gary North, *Sovereignty and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Genesis* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012)., ch. 4.

enant that God renewed with Noah (Gen. 9:1–2).[6] I call this the dominion covenant. This covenant defines mankind. It has stipulations. First, men are to exercise dominion. This is a positive task. Second, the original conditions applied in the garden. Adam was told not to eat from a particular tree. This was a negative command. It placed a legal boundary around God's property. This command served as a test of man's obedience.

The broken covenant brought death to man and his heirs. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come" (Rom. 5:12–14). This historical sanction has been applied by God and continues to be applied. Death reigned before God gave the written law to Moses. So, there has to be a more universal law than the Mosaic law, or else death would not have been imposed from Adam to Moses. It was not because men kept eating from a forbidden tree that they died, Paul says. They died because of Adam's sin. But why? Because this sin was judicially representative, even as Jesus' righteousness is judicially representative.

> For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous (Rom. 5:15b–19).

The covenant's sanction of physical death is applied to mankind throughout history because of the judicially representative status of the original law-breaker, Adam. By breaking one law, he broke all of them. James wrote: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10). Adam's sin was representative for all mankind. The law he broke was representative of all of God's laws.

6. *Ibid.*, ch. 18.

The covenant between God and man was broken by Adam when he ate the forbidden fruit. The law's negative sanction is now applied to all men. Paul writes in Romans 2 that the negative sanction of final judgment is sure. Men will not be caught unaware by the final judgment, because they know enough about what God's law requires of every person for them to conclude that final negative sanctions are coming on "the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel" (v. 16). Paul is arguing the following: the ethical terms of the covenant are sufficiently well known to all men in history so as to render them without excuse before God. Men also know enough about God's final sanctions so as to render them without excuse. What kinds of evidence offers them such condemning testimony? Sanctions that are imposed by governments, including civil government. Men see that evil is punished in history by civil government and other lawful governments. Paul writes: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God" (Rom. 13:1).[7] Men know that every society requires such sanctions. They also know that these universal systems of governmental sanctions point to God's final judgment. But covenant-breaking people actively suppress this testimony of their consciences, just as they actively suppress the testimony that God must be worshiped in spirit and in truth.[8]

C. Corporate Action

The free market economist generally begins with the assumption of individual self-determination: man as the owner of his own person. The socialist economist begins with the state as the proper agency of economic representation: the owner of the means of production, including men's labor time. The free market economist cannot logically move from the sovereignty of an individual's value preferences to a concept of corporate social value that relies on state coercion that violates a law-breaker's individual values and preferences. The socialist economist cannot logically move from the sovereignty of the state's corporate social value scale to a concept of sovereign individual values and preferences. Yet, in practice, most free market economists do affirm the legitimacy of the state, and socialists do allow individuals to retain some degree of control over their persons and goods, if only for the benefits in improved efficiency that private ownership

7. Chapter 11.
8. Chapter 3.

produces in individuals. There is a logical dilemma here. It involves the philosophical problem of the one and the many: dealing with hypothetically autonomous individuals and their underlying unity in society.[9]

A Christian economist has available to him a solution to this epistemological dilemma: the covenant. God established a covenant with mankind through Adam. This covenant still is binding, even though Adam violated its terms. It is still judicially representative. This doctrine of judicial representation rests on the doctrine of man as God's image in history (Gen. 1:26). In every person, there is a conscience that imparts some knowledge of what God's laws require. God brings sanctions, positive and negative, in terms of men's obedience to His laws. These sanctions are historical as well as final. They are both individual and corporate, but they are more predictably corporate (Deut. 28) than individual.[10] Sanctions are less predictably applied in individual cases.

> A Psalm of Asaph. Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart. But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men (Ps. 73:1–5).
>
> Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning (Ps. 73:12–14).
>
> Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image. Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins. So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee (Ps. 73:17–22).

Because the Bible authorizes civil governments to impose negative sanctions on behalf of God, it is possible for a society to avoid some of God's negative sanctions by enforcing God's civil laws. These laws

9. R. J. Rushdoony, *The One and the Many: Studies in the Philosophy of Order and Ultimacy* (Vallecito, California: Ross House, [1971] 2007).

10. Gary North, *Inheritance and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Deuteronomy*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 1999] 2012), ch. 69.

are revealed in the Bible. Men can understand them. These biblical laws are consistent with the work of the law written in men's hearts. There is a common humanity. This common humanity involves a common perception of right and wrong. This ethical information is actively suppressed to one degree or other by sinful men. That men believe in God is clear from Romans 1:18–20.[11] That they do not come to a widely shared conclusion about what God is or how He wants men to worship Him is equally clear. Common revelation and common logic do not persuade covenant-breaking men that the God of the Bible has mandated specific forms of worship (Rom. 1:21–22).

The same is true of men's individual responses to God's law. Men know what the work of God's law requires, but they suppress this information in an attempt to escape the law's burdens and its sanctions. There is no system of logic that can persuade covenant-breaking men that the Bible's laws are mandatory. Even the Israelites needed regular reinforcement of this idea. The king was told to read the texts of God's law. "And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites: And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them" (Deut. 17:18–19). The nation was to assemble every seven years to listen to a reading of the law. "And Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, When all Israel is come to appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the LORD your God, and observe to do all the words of this law" (Deut. 31:10–12).[12] The work of the law of God is written in every human heart, but rebellious men nevertheless need written revelation and regularly scheduled reinforcement through hearing this written revelation.

D. Natural Law Theory

Natural law theory originated after the conquest of the Greek city-states, first by Alexander the Great and then by Rome. Stoic political

11. Chapter 1.
12. North, *Inheritance and Dominion*, ch. 75.

philosophers had to replace their theory of the autonomy of the polis and its laws. They wanted to find some theoretical foundation for their ethical system, which had previously relied on intellectual defenses based on the sovereignty of the polis. Natural law theory was their solution.[13]

Natural law theory assumes that there is a common logic among men. This common-ground logic is said to bind all men, so that by adopting it, we can persuade all rational men of truths regarding social and political ethics. Christian philosophers have adopted this idea. They have confused it with the *work of the law* written on all men's hearts, which is a doctrine of *common-ground ethics*, not common-ground logic. The main effect of natural law theory today has been to persuade Christians to abandon the Bible as the basis of civil law and to begin a quest for common civil laws and common civil sanctions.

The theoretical problem with natural law theory is that covenant-breakers suppress the truth in unrighteousness.[14] Their powers of reasoning have been negatively affected by sin. *They begin with the assumption of their own intellectual autonomy*. They cannot logically conclude from this assumption the existence of the absolutely sovereign God of the Bible and His binding law.[15] Natural law theory is a logical system that begins with the assumption of man's autonomy, which means that natural law theory has nothing in common with the assumption of God's sovereignty. Natural law theory assumes that covenant-breaking men can build and sustain a just society on the basis of natural laws, natural rights, and universal logic.

Natural law theory also assumes that sin and its effects have not adversely distorted the image of God in man. It assumes that fallen men do not actively suppress the truth. These two errors lead to a false conclusion, namely, that an appeal to common-ground logic can persuade fallen men. But if Paul was correct, how can natural men be persuaded to obey God, based on natural law theory? Paul entertained no such hope. "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, be-

13. Sheldon S. Wolin, *Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1960), pp. 77–82.

14. Chapter 2.

15. This was an argument in the philosophy of Cornelius Van Til. See Greg L. Bahnsen, *Van Til's Apologetic: Readings and Analysis* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1998), pp. 309–10, extract from Van Til's *The Protestant Doctrine of Scripture* (P&R, 1967), pp. 12–13.

cause they are spiritually discerned" (I Cor. 2:14).[16] God's law is spiritually discerned, but only by those who are spiritual—and not even by very many of them, as the history of Christian political theory indicates. The work of God's law is naturally discerned to a degree sufficient to condemn men for disobeying it, but not sufficiently to enable them to build a biblically moral society. The natural man suppresses the testimony of creation regarding God the Creator, reinterpreting God to conform to his covenant-breaking interpretation of reality. Why should Christians believe that the natural man will not do the same thing with the work of the law written on his heart? Why should Christians believe that an appeal to natural law should be any more successful in bringing men to judicial truth than to theological truth?

Today, Christian scholars are among the few remaining defenders of natural law theory. *Darwinism has undermined faith in natural law theory among most humanists*. Autonomous, evolving, impersonal nature is widely believed to offer no moral standards. The survival of a species is not a moral imperative. Darwinian nature has no moral imperatives. *For Darwinism, there is no permanent natural law*. Everything evolves, including ethics. Because man's social and physical environments change, says the Darwinist, any ethical standards that do not promote the survival of humanity must be abandoned if mankind is to survive, yet survival is not an ethical imperative of nature unless man somehow represents nature on behalf of . . . whom? Man? God? Nature?[17] There is no agreement among Darwinists regarding either the existence or the content of fixed ethical precepts that are derived from nature. Darwinian ethical systems are shaped by mankind's uniquely understood requirement to survive in a constantly changing environment. This is the creed of social Darwinism, whether statist (e.g., Lester Frank Ward) or individualist (e.g., Herbert Spencer).[18] This is also the creed of free market economists, Rothbard excepted.[19]

Natural law theory in Christian circles is always an attempt to fuse Jerusalem and Athens. It is an attempt to reconcile autonomous man and the God of the Bible. No such reconciliation is possible. Because

16. Gary North, *Judgment and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on First Corinthians*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2001] 2012), ch. 2.

17. Bill McKibben, *The End of Nature* (New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1989).

18. North, *Sovereignty and Dominion*, Appendix A.

19. Rothbard defended the idea of permanent ethical standards, which he believed are derived from Aristotelian natural rights theory. Rothbard broke with Mises' utilitarianism and Hayek's social evolutionism. Murray N. Rothbard, *The Ethics of Liberty* (New York: New York University Press, [1982] 1998). On Hayek, see North, *Sovereignty and Dominion*, Appendix B.

of God's common grace, covenant-breaking men are restrained in their suppression of the work of the law in their hearts. But, as they think more consistently with their presuppositions regarding God, man, law, consequences, and time, they become more hostile to the work of the law in their hearts. Logic does not persuade them.

E. The Witness of Common Grace

God has revealed to all men what they must do to gain His positive sanctions in eternity: trust and obey. God has also given them sufficient revelation in nature to distinguish good laws from bad laws. God's Bible-revealed laws are the good laws that some covenant-breakers do recognize as beneficial. Moses told the generation of the conquest: "Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?" (Deut. 4:5–8).[20]

The fact that some covenant-breakers can and do recognize the beneficial corporate results of God's laws, including His civil laws, does not mean that they will adopt these laws or enforce them faithfully whenever they do adopt them. No foreign nation around Israel ever adopted Israel's legal system, although the people of Nineveh did repent temporarily from their most blatant personal sins (Jonah 3). The Queen of Sheba did come for specific counsel from Solomon (I Kings 10:1–10).

These incidents in Israel's history indicate that on specific issues, covenant-breakers do recognize the wisdom of God's law. A covenant-breaking society may adopt certain aspects of God's law in personal ethics or even social ethics, but it will not adopt biblical law as a comprehensive system of justice. Apart from God's gift to a society of widespread, soul-saving, special grace, God does not empower a society to maintain its commitment to those few biblical laws that it may have adopted. *Eventually, covenant-breakers rebel*, just as Nineveh

20. North, *Inheritance and Dominion*, ch. 8.

rebelled before Assyria invaded Israel. Common grace requires special grace in order to overcome mankind's ethical rebellion.[21]

F. Social Utility

1. Law Enforcement

Covenant-breaking men do recognize the existence of certain benefits from the enforcement of certain biblical laws. This offers Christian social theorists a solution to the epistemological problem of social utility. *Because of the image of God in every man, all men can and do perceive the benefits of obeying God's law*. They can see the positive results of God's law, meaning God's positive corporate sanctions for obeying God's civil laws. As we have seen, the Bible teaches this explicitly. The problem is, covenant-breakers suppress this testimony. Israel did, too. Men in their rebellion deny to themselves that God's law is valid. They deny that its benefits offset its costs.

Nevertheless, God restrains men's rebellion against His law, just as He restrains rebellion against false worship. He does not allow covenant-breaking men to become completely consistent in their rebellion. Because there is a shared perception among all the sons of Adam, due to God's image, it is possible for a civil government to pass laws against certain forms of public evil. These laws produce society-wide benefits. Evil-doers lose in this arrangement. This is one of the law's major benefits. Paul says that this is God's purpose for all civil law. "For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil" (Rom. 13:3–4).[22] The disutility produced by biblical civil sanctions in the life of the evil-doer is a benefit to society. His loss is society's gain. *There is a net increase in social utility when evil-doers suffer losses for their evil deeds*, either after they are judged by civil judges or before, when they decide not to seek their evil ends because of their fear of civil sanctions. Through natural revelation, covenant-breaking men know that this is the case, even though they partially suppress this truth. This is why all societies enforce laws against certain forms of public evil, such as murder.

21. Gary North, *Dominion and Common Grace: The Biblical Basis of Progress* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987), ch. 6.

22. Chapter 11.

2. Methodological Individualism

Methodological individualism, in its strict formulation, denies the existence of measurable social utility. It denies that there is any scientific case for social utility, because of the absence of any value scale common to all men.[23]

Humanistic economics also denies the legitimacy of any appeal to God, and this includes any appeal to the biblical doctrine of the image of God in man. In theory, say free market economists, there can be no aggregating of individual utilities. Then most of them pull back from their conclusion. They do not become fully consistent.[24]

To deny social utility is to deny to the free market economist the ability to assess scientifically the net social benefit of any proposal, public or private. The economist can legitimately say that a participant in a voluntary exchange entered into that exchange in the hope of benefitting from it, but social utility remains an illusion. *He cannot logically say anything about social utility*. This forces a consistent methodological individualist to remain silent when asked about the social utility of any piece of civil legislation. *To use civil coercion in a quest to increase total social utility is to violate the principle of methodological individualism*. Civil law discriminates against those who act in certain prohibited ways. But the consistent methodological individualist views all of men's actions as equally the result of utility-maximization. *All utilities are equal, he says*. The economist seeks to be ethically neutral, as true scientists supposedly should. So, he is trapped by his individualism and his claim of ethical neutrality. If he remains consistent, he cannot recommend or discourage any piece of legislation in his capacity as a scientist. He can say nothing about how to increase or decrease social utility, which does not exist as a scientifically valid category.[25]

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23. Lionel Robbins, *An Essay on the Nature and Significance of Economic Science*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, [1932] 1945), ch. VI.

24. Gary North, *Hierarchy and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on First Timothy*, 2nd. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2011] 2012), Appendix B.

25. Murray N. Rothbard deduced from a voluntary exchange an increase in social utility. Rothbard, "Toward a Reconstruction of Utility and Welfare Economics" (1956), in Rothbard, *The Logic of Action I: Method, Money and the Austrian School* (Lyme, New Hampshire: Edward Elgar, 1997), ch. 10. But he faced a major epistemological problem: envy. If each of two people increases his personal individual utility through voluntary exchange, but a third party resents this, the economist cannot legitimately say that there has been an increase in social utility. He cannot measure the increase in personal utility of the two traders and then subtract from this the disutility of third-party resentment. There is no common value scale. So, to make the logical case for his reconstruction, Rothbard had to deny envy, which he explicitly did. He said the economist must

Do we find methodological individualists who remain silent regarding the positive or negative effects of legislation? Rarely. They have strong opinions on how to increase net social utility, which they attempt to defend scientifically. They use their skills as economists to take stands for or against specific civil laws. They say that a law would be a benefit or a liability to society. They implicitly rely on the concept of social utility to justify their support of or opposition to civil laws. In this sense, we can say that God restrains their consistency both as methodological individualists and as ethical neutralists. As fully consistent methodological individualists and as fully ethically neutral, they would remove legitimacy from all civil governments, which would undermine the God-ordained covenantal authority of the state. "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God" (Rom. 13:1).

Paul identifies the office of civil magistrate as a ministry. "For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil" (Rom. 13:4).[26] God therefore restrains methodological individualists and ethical neutralists in their war against the legitimacy of the civil covenant. They abandon their epistemological commitments for the sake of their own relevancy in public discourse. They do not announce, "I'm sorry; I can say nothing about the social costs or benefits of this policy." On the contrary, they encourage legislators and judges to estimate social costs and social benefits of some civil law in the state's legitimate quest for greater social efficiency. They may even promote their own assessments of the policy in terms of social justice, which is usually seen by them as efficient, too.

Conclusion

In my studies of biblical economics, I have repeatedly returned to the themes of social utility and social cost, which are ultimately epis-

ignore envy because there is no way to know if a person really is envious. Years later, in one of his most important essays, Rothbard adopted sociologist Helmut Schoeck's thesis of equalitarianism as the product of envy, which Schoeck presented in *Envy: A Theory of Social Behavior* (New York: Harcourt Brace, [1966] 1969). When Rothbard did this, he undermined the justification in his 1956 essay for saying that voluntary exchanges increase social utility. Rothbard, "Freedom, Inequality, Primitivism and the Division of Labor" (1971), in Rothbard, *Egalitarianism: A Revolt Against Nature* (Auburn, Alabama: Mises Institute, [1974] 2000).

26. Chapter 11.

temological questions regarding the possibility of conceptual aggregation.[27] Economics as a science faces the same epistemological dilemma that political philosophy faces: logically reconciling the one and the many.[28] To move from the presupposition of the autonomous individual to a discussion of society-benefitting civil sanctions requires a leap of faith by methodological individualists. This leap of faith is eventually taken by all of them. They rarely explain why this procedure is valid, given their presuppositions.[29]

Christianity offers the epistemological solution: the doctrine of man as the image of God, who Himself is both one and many, three persons yet one God. Men have the work of the law written in their hearts. A sufficient number of people in a society can come to agreements regarding the imposition of legitimate civil sanctions, thereby increasing total social utility. This is possible because they understand covenantal cause and effect as it applies to civil government, even though they suppress this knowledge to one degree or other.

Paul's discussion in Romans 1 of covenant-breaking man's willful suppression of the truth offers insights into his discussion of the work of the law in Romans 2. All men know who the Creator God is, Paul insists, but they suppress this revelation. They prefer to worship gods of their own imagination. Similarly, they perceive what God requires of them ethically, but they prefer to obey laws of their own creation.

The image of God in man enables a covenant-breaking legislator to perceive the social benefits of certain biblical laws, but covenant-breakers hold back[30] this perception in unrighteousness. They cannot completely suppress the truth, for God restrains them in their rebellion. This is why legislators do not pass utterly destructive laws. This is why civil judges can serve as ministers of God. It is also why economists can perceive the socially destructive effects of some pieces of free market-undermining legislation. But any moral or intellectual

27. North, *Sovereignty and Dominion*, ch. 5; North, *Authority and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Exodus* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), Part 3, Tools of Dominion (1990), Appendix H.

28. Rushdoony, *One and the Many*.

29. This includes Lionel Robbins, who reversed himself in 1939, fleeing from the inescapable conclusion in his *Nature and Significance of Economic Science* (1932) that all policy advice is illegitimate because of the impossibility of making interpersonal comparisons of subjective utility. He backtracked in his debate with Roy Harrod: Lionel Robbins, "Interpersonal Comparisons of Subjective Utility" *Economic Journal*, XLVIII (1938), p. 637. For a discussion of this retreat, See North, *Sovereignty and Dominion*, ch. 5:C:1.

30. Murray, *Epistle to the Romans*, I, p. 37.

appeal to natural law subsidizes the enthronement of autonomous man. Autonomous man will eventually pursue programs that lead to his destruction. "But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death" (Prov. 8:36).

4

IMPUTATION AND THE LAWS OF ECONOMICS

Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

ROMANS 3:30–31

The theocentric focus of this passage is sanctions, point four of the biblical covenant.[1] God is merciful, who justifies sinners by means of their faith in His son, Jesus Christ, who died for their sins. God upholds His law, yet He also grants mercy. The gospel of God's sovereign grace through the exercise of faith is not in conflict with the law of God. The law is established by faith.

Before we get to the implications of this passage for economic theory, we must first understand the passage in relation to its context: man's objective legal standing before God.

A. Imputation: Objective and Subjective

Paul clarifies what God has done on behalf of His people. He reminds his readers that the basis of their hope in God is not their personal fulfillment of the terms of God's law, which they have not done and cannot do. Rather, their only legitimate hope is in Christ, who died for their sins. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8).

God has declared His people righteous. That is to say, God has *imputed* righteousness to them. Here is the meaning of justification:

1. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1987] 1992), ch. 4. Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory*, 5th ed. (Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision, 2010), ch. 4.

God's declaration of a person's lawful judicial standing before Him. This is a judicial act, sometimes called a forensic act. The early chapters in Romans deal with God's imputation of righteousness to His people. "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Rom. 3:28). The Greek word translated here as "conclude" is the same as the word translated "impute." It should probably be translated here as "declare." The translators also translated the word as "reckoned" and "counted."

> Now to him that worketh is the reward not **reckoned** of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is **counted** for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God **imputeth** righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not **impute** sin (Rom. 4:4–8).

> How was it then **reckoned**? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be **imputed** unto them also (Rom. 4:10–11).

> And therefore it was **imputed** to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was **imputed** to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be **imputed**, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification (Rom. 4:22–25).

God declares a sinner justified in His sight. This declaration is a judicial act. God sovereignly decides not to count a man's sins against him. He announces, "Not guilty." He does this because of the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, whose moral perfection God transfers to the redeemed person at the time of his redemption.[2] Jesus Christ lived an objectively perfect life and died under God's objective curse. "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit" (I Peter 3:18). God the Father made Jesus Christ to be sin for His people, to suffer objectively on behalf of His people in their place. "…God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath com-

2. John Murray, "Definitive Sanctification" (1967), in *The Collected Works of John Murray*, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1977), II, ch. 21.

mitted unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (II Cor. 5:19–21).

Sin and its consequences are objective. The sinner comes under God's objective negative sanctions because of his sins. Jesus Christ suffered objectively on the cross. *Justification is objective*: right legal standing before God. *Imputation is objective*: God's declaration of the innocence of those who have put their faith in Christ's objective atonement as their substitute. *Sanctification is objective*: the transfer of Christ's moral perfection to the redeemed at the time of his redemption. All of these aspects of regeneration are objective. *Yet they are also subjective*, in the same sense that God's day-by-day witness to the goodness of His work of creation was subjective (Gen. 1). There is a *subjective perception* of an *objective condition*.

When God declares a person "not guilty," He makes a personal judgment. The sovereign Subject declares what is objectively true. The objective truth is assessed subjectively by God. Then He declares the truth objectively. But God does more than declare it; He has predestinated the objective historical conditions that make His declaration possible, beginning with the crucifixion. "And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!" (Luke 22:22). "The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together. For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done" (Acts 4:26–28).

There is the story of an umpire who makes a judgment regarding a violation of the game's rules. A player complains against the call. The umpire says one of three things in his defense. "I call them as I see them." This makes the game dependent on his perception; the violation does not have independent existence. This is the approach of philosophical nominalism. "I call them as they are." The violation has objective existence, and the umpire faithfully declares its existence. This is the approach of philosophical realism. "They are what I call them." This places sovereignty in the perception of the umpire. The violation derives its existence from the umpire's categories and his application of these categories to the perceived facts. This is Kantianism.

What is the correct view? When speaking of a declaration by the God of the Bible, the correct view is covenantalism: "I call them as I have foreordained them." The event is what God had originally predestined it to be, and now He accurately assesses it. Then He declares it. When speaking of a declaration by a man, however, covenantalism applies differently: "I call them as I believe God has predestined them, but I am not God. The game, however, must go on." A perfect call is possible only for God, but men can make progressively improved calls when they diligently study God's rule book and gain experience over time by applying the rules to the real world. Even those umpires who have not studied the rule book can make calls sufficiently accurate to keep the game going, for the work of the rules are written on every observer's heart (Rom. 2:14–15).[3]

Paul asks: "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law" (v. 31). Faith is a subjective act on man's part, but it has objective results. Through a person's subjective faith comes his objective deliverance from sin. Sin is not merely subjective. It is objective. Men objectively break God's law. They come under objective sanctions because of their sin. Their faith in Christ then objectively redeems them from the worst objective consequences of sin.

B. The Laws of God and Nature

This two-fold aspect of redemption—subjective and objective—raises the question of God's law. God's law is more than a category of human thought. It is more than a conventional opinion of men in society. It is not the product of a subjective agreement among men. It is the objective product of subjective agreement among the three persons of the Godhead. God declares His law objectively. This declaration is based on subjective agreement. The declaration by God makes the law objectively true, just as He spoke the universe into existence out of nothing (Gen. 1).

1. Declared Law

Law is declared by God. He has revealed His law verbally to men in the past, beginning with Adam. "And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of

3. Chapter 3.

it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:16–17). God caused Moses to write down God's law. "And the LORD said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel. And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments" (Ex. 34:27–28). God subsequently raised up prophets to declare His law publicly. *God's law is therefore both objective and subjective*. It has been declared objectively in history by the Creator and Judge of man. But God is simultaneously three persons and one person—subjective. Law is under His authority. Law has no independent existence apart from God. It has no independent authority alongside God. It surely has no independent existence above God.

God has created the universe to be run by His laws, yet He actively sustains it. Specifically, this is the work of the second person of the Trinity. "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet [fit] to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist" (Col. 1:12–17).

2. Natural Laws

Men speak of the existence of natural laws. The archetype is the law of gravity, first described mathematically by Newton, but recognized and honored by all mankind. Newton could not explain gravity: attraction at a distance.

There is no record in the Bible of God's announcement of the law of gravity, but there is a description of its operation. "Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone" (Matt. 4:5–6).[4]

4. Gary North, *Priorities and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Matthew*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 2.

We say that the law of gravity is a natural law because its operation does not depend on men's opinions. Even today, scientists do not know how it operates; they can only describe some of its effects. Scientists do not know how stars and planets attract each other physically in the vacuum of interplanetary space; they only know that this attraction exists, and that scientists can describe its operations mathematically. Furthermore, scientists do not know why the subjective logic of mathematics should describe the objective, impersonal operations of the natural world. It is unreasonable to imagine that certain subjective, common laws of men's minds should describe so precisely the physical operations of objective physical reality, but this is what science declares.[5]

The debate begins when men seek to defend natural laws as either laws of creation or laws of evolution. Did God create these laws, or did they evolve within an uncreated, impersonal universe? Modern science asserts the latter. Darwin's theory of the evolution of all species through impersonal, purposeless natural selection has been widely accepted by scientists because this theory extends modern science's theory of cosmic impersonalism to the origin and development of life. *Modern science begins with the assumption of the autonomy of nature: naturalism*. "Nature giveth, and nature taketh away. Blessed be the name of nature." Nature has produced mankind. Scientists can discover nature and nature's laws. "Evolutionary scientists giveth, and evolutionary scientists taketh away. Blessed be the name of evolutionary scientists."

C. The Logic of Economics

When we speak of economic laws, such as the law of supply and demand, we are not describing legislation that has been passed by a civil government. But the law of supply and demand does not exist independently of the opinions of men to the same degree that the law of gravity does. The way this law operates is shaped by legislation and enforcement. Nevertheless, the law of supply and demand is not dependent on government legislation, nor can it be repealed by legislation. In this sense, it is thought by some economists to be natural.

The law of supply and demand is not comparable to the laws of planetary motion, although economists have often adopted the math-

5. Eugene P. Wigner, "The Unreasonable Effectiveness of Mathematics in the Natural Sciences," *Communications in Pure and Applied Mathematics*, XIII (1960), pp. 1–14. Wigner won the Nobel Prize in Physics.

ematical style of the astronomer or the physicist in formally describing the law's operations. The economist offers a causal explanation for certain perceived regularities in human action. Men recognize these *patterns of behavior*; the economist offers reasons for these recurring patterns. He does so in part through *introspection*, although he may not admit this when he presents his explanations. First, he thinks about how he makes decisions; then he extends his discoveries to other men. The astronomer does not look inward in his attempt to understand the laws of planetary motion, which are exclusively physical. Economic laws are not physical. They are the product of human action in a God-cursed world of finite resources, i.e., the world of God's curse of the ground (Gen. 3:17–19).[6]

1. Epistemology

How can men discover the laws of economics? This is the question of epistemology. Economists are not in agreement on the answer. Ludwig von Mises hypothesized a deductive logic of human action. He sought to discover a few universal axioms of human action. From these, he believed, an entire system of economics can be deduced logically. Mises was unique in this defense of axiomatic laws of exchange, a science that he called *catallactics*. Catallactics is a subset of a more general science of the laws of human action, a science which he called *praxeology*.[7] Few economists have adopted this deductivist approach, and in this century, those who have adopted it have generally been followers of Mises.

In contrast to Mises, most economists say that they begin with tentative hypotheses regarding how men universally act in their quest to conserve scarce resources. Economists then look for supporting evidence in history. They also predict the outcome of certain market processes. But these predictions are of a peculiar kind. Economists adopt an "if…then" logic to make their predictions. "If the money supply increases, and if production does not increase, then some prices will rise." Then they look for examples in history of monetary expansion,

6. Gary North, *Sovereignty and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Genesis* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1982] 2012), ch. 12.

7. Ludwig von Mises, *Human Action: A Treatise on Economics* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1949), chaps. 1–3. Mises' distinction between praxeology and catallactics was his admission of the distinctions in the allocation and distribution of scarce resources in an institutional framework based on private ownership and open bidding (the free market) vs. institutions that are not based on these legal principles: family, church, state, and charitable agencies.

stable production, and generally rising prices, i.e., a rising index of prices. But there are times when the money supply increases, yet the official price index does not rise. This in no way disturbs economists. There are several ways around this discrepancy. "Prices would have fallen had there not been an increase in the money supply." Or, "The velocity of money fell, despite the increase in its supply. People held onto money longer, so prices did not rise." Or, "The official index of prices is no longer correctly weighted statistically to reflect the items that most people are buying." Or, "The older definition of money is no longer applicable." Economists remain committed to their theories long after these theories no longer describe what is taking place in the world of entrepreneurial decision-making.

Economists assert a similar "if . . . then" logic to validate their epistemology. "*If* my 'if . . . then' predictions come true more often than the results of flipping a coin—random outcomes—*then* my hypothesis regarding a particular operation of the laws of economics should be accepted as provisionally true." This methodology is called positivist: descriptive rather than prescriptive. It is also said to be empirical, i.e., ratified by observed evidence. To this extent, economics is said to be inductivist: derived from historical facts.

2. Human Autonomy

Both the deductivist (*a priori*) economic methodology and the inductivist (*a posteriori*) economic methodology begin with the assumption of the autonomy of man.[8] Economists in both camps insist that any explanation that relies on the assumption of God, providence, or the supernatural has no place in economic science. Supernaturalism is said to be scientifically unverifiable. What economists do not mention is the fact that scientists have adopted standards of verification that exclude God, providence, and the supernatural. Modern science is methodologically naturalistic, *a priori*. Scientists assume what they need to prove: the autonomy of the universe, i.e., the absence of the providence of God.

Economists believe that the laws of economics are more than social conventions. These laws are said to govern human affairs irrespective of what men believe about them. These laws influence men's social relationships. Some of these laws' effects can be predicted, though

8. Gary North, "Economics: From Reason to Intuition," in North (ed.), *Foundations of Christian Scholarship: Essays in the Van Til Perspective* (Vallecito, California: Ross House, 1976).

not with absolute precision. For example, *if* civil government passes a law that sets a price of an item lower than the free market price, *then* shortages of the regulated items will develop at the official, legal price. More of these items will be demanded than supplied at the legal price. This law of economic cause and effect is not found in the Bible. It is also not discovered mathematically, although it is often described by economists with the use of mathematics or graphs. This law's results are sometimes visible, most notably when long lines form in front of stores that sell the price-controlled item.

3. Supply and Demand

The Bible records examples of the fundamental economic law of supply and demand. Consider the account of the siege of Samaria in Elisha's day. "And it came to pass after this, that Ben-hadad king of Syria gathered all his host, and went up, and besieged Samaria. And there was a great famine in Samaria: and, behold, they besieged it, until an ass's head was sold for fourscore pieces of silver, and the fourth part of a cab of dove's dung for five pieces of silver" (II Kings 6:24–25). This siege would soon be lifted, Elisha prophesied. Soon after it is lifted, Elisha said, prices will fall. "Then Elisha said, Hear ye the word of the LORD; Thus saith the LORD, To morrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria" (II Kings 7:1). He was implicitly announcing that an objective increase in the supply of goods would soon produce an objective decline in prices. Elisha's economic forecast implicitly assumed that there would be no objective increase in demand to offset the objective increase in supply. Elisha used the imminent outcome of the law of supply and demand—lower prices—to present his prophecy of the end of the siege. He did not say that the Syrian troops would soon leave; he said that the siege-induced prices would soon fall. He knew that his listeners would understand what he was saying about the siege. The law of supply and demand operated in ancient Israel, but a detailed description of the logic undergirding this law—the logic of the auction—is not provided in the Bible.

4. Economic Imputation

According to modern economic thought, prices are the objective result of men's subjective evaluations regarding the value of scarce resources. Economists call this process "imputation." People are said to impute value to a good or a service. Different men impute differ-

ent value, depending on their individual value scales. This imputation process is purely subjective, but it is applies to objective conditions: supply, demand, and market price. Through objective bidding among sellers, and also through objective bidding among buyers, an objective price appears in the market. *The market is a giant, complex auction system*. The law of supply and demand therefore operates both objectively and subjectively. It operates in the affairs of men because men objectively bid for scarce resources that they subjectively believe are objectively necessary for them in order for them to attain their subjectively generated goals for the future.

The law of supply and demand is objectively true. It governs the economic decisions of men even though they may not understand it. Those who heard Elisha's forecast were expected by the prophet to understand it. His prophecy was a prophecy regarding the siege far more than it was a forecast of prices, but it is was presented as a forecast of prices. He expected his listeners to deduce from this forecast that the siege would end before the next day was over. In this sense, the law of supply and demand was presumed by the prophet. So was the widespread public understanding of this law. Had this not been true, his prophecy would have been unintelligible.

Conclusion

God subjectively assesses a person "guilty" because of the objective guilt of the sinner. God objectively declares a redeemed person "not guilty" because of the objective innocence of Jesus Christ, which is then by grace transferred by God to the sinner. *God's imputation is subjective, but it is based on objective conditions*.

A man subjectively imputes value to one additional unit of a scarce economic resource in terms of his subjective perception of objective conditions: his existing supply of the good and the estimated objective supply held by other owners. His scale of values is subjective. He decides what is important to him, from most important to least important. But his scale of values is not autonomous. It does not exist independent of God, who has made man in His own image. *The common image of God in all people makes possible socially objective agreements about what is important*.[9]

The laws of economics are objective because man's image is objective, and also because God's curse of man's work and his environ-

9. Chapter 1.

ment is objective. Subjective imputations by men who live in an objectively cursed, finite environment lead to their objective decisions, which in turn establish objective market conditions: supply, demand, and prices. A man's subjective imputations make him objectively responsible before God, even before he takes objective action. "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matt. 5:27–28). He is also responsible for the actions that result from his subjective decisions. "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" (Matt. 15:18–19). God imputes meaning to each man's subjective imputations, his objective decisions, and the objective outcomes of his decisions. God does this in terms of His own subjective scale of values—moral values. These divine values govern God's establishment of analogous values that are to govern men, who are made in God's image. These analogous values become objective for men, either because of the work of the law objectively written on their subjective hearts (Rom. 2:14–15)[10] or the law objectively written on their subjective hearts (Heb. 8:8–13; 10:15–17).

Humanistic economists deny that a supernatural realm affects the operation of the market. While they do admit men's subjective opinions about the supernatural realm may influence the array of prices, the supernatural is said by economists not to be an objective factor in economics. There is no divine objective scale of values, nor is the image of God in man a relevant issue for economic theory—so economists assume. There is no theoretically valid appeal beyond the realm of the creation, which is said to be autonomous. Man calls things as he sees them, or calls them as they are. Ultimately, things are what man calls them, the modern humanist insists. But which man? The sovereign individual or the sovereign state that represents collective man? On this, economists disagree. So do political philosophers.

10. Chapter 3.

5

SUBORDINATION AND DELIVERANCE

> *For the earnest expectation of the creature [creation] waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature [creation] was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature [creation] itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.*
>
> ROMANS 8:19–22

The theocentric focus of this passage is God's curse on the creation (Gen. 3:18).[1] This is an aspect of sanctions: point four of the biblical covenant.[2] Paul says that the deliverance of the creation from this curse will take place at some point in the future.

A. The Sons of Men

The creation awaits "the manifestation of the sons of God." The word translated as "manifestation" is *apokalupsys*. It can be translated as "appearing." Example: "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (I Peter 1:7). It is also the word for "revelation." "Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by

1. Gary North, *Sovereignty and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Genesis* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1982] 2012) , ch. 12.

2. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1987] 1992), ch. 4. Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory*, 5th ed. (Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision, 2010), ch. 4.

knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?" (I Cor. 14:6). "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John" (Rev. 1:1).

The final revelation regarding the sons of men—all mankind—is the final judgment. "And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:13–15).

Who are these sons of men? Does this phrase mean mankind in general? In the Old Testament, the phrase sometimes is applied to mankind in general. "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" (Ps. 8:4). "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help" (Ps. 146:3). The phrase appears most frequently in Ezekiel to name the prophet. "And he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee" (Ezek. 2:1). Daniel referred to the son of man as a messenger of God. "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him" (Dan. 7:13). God spoke to Daniel using this phrase. "So he came near where I stood: and when he came, I was afraid, and fell upon my face: but he said unto me, Understand, O son of man: for at the time of the end shall be the vision" (Dan. 8:17). In the New Testament, Jesus used this phrase to identify Himself. "And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Matt. 8:20).[3] "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house" (Matt. 9:6).

What is the context of the phrase in Romans? It refers to the work of the Holy Spirit in regenerating men. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then

3. Gary North, *Priorities and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Matthew*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 19.

heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" (Rom. 8:14–17).

Here, the revelation of the sons of men has to refer to the coming of Christ's gospel in history. This revelation had already begun in Paul's day, but it had not yet transformed either Roman or Jewish society. The creation still awaits this greater manifestation, Paul says. What does the creation await? Deliverance from the bondage of corruption. "Because the creature [creation] itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom. 8:21). But why should the creation expect such a thing? Because this deliverance will come for the sons of men. "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18). This points to the final deliverance from sin. The sufferings of the present do not compare to the glory of the post-resurrection world.

B. Progressive Deliverance from Sin and Its Curses

Will there be any corporate manifestation in history of this final personal deliverance from sin? This raises the issue of eschatology. The amillennialist does not believe that history manifests this final deliverance, except insofar as the church reflects it, but the church is surrounded by a hostile world, and this non-delivered condition will continue until the end of history. The premillennialist believes the same until the Second Coming of Christ inaugurates His earthly kingdom's millennial reign. During this millennial reign, the premillennialist might say—if premillennialists ever commented on such matters—that the creation may begin to be delivered from God's curse because of the deliverance of human society from sin's effects. But this deliverance will not come prior to Christ's bodily return into history. Until then, the church will remain an oasis of deliverance from sin in a desert of evil. The creation will continue to groan.

Paul's revelation in this passage is a New Testament application of Isaiah's prophecy regarding the New Heaven and New Earth. "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an

hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed" (Isa. 65:17–20). Isaiah's prophecy cannot refer to the post-resurrection state, for it speaks of sinners, who will not be present in the post-resurrection covenanted community (Rev. 20:14–15). Isaiah's prophecy has to do with history. So, therefore, does Paul's. Isaiah's prophecy is related to his previous messianic prophecy.

> And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea (Isa. 11:1–9).

The creation will at some time cease to be a war zone. This passage refers to warring nations. It uses a metaphor to drive home this prophecy into the reader's consciousness: the peaceful interaction between fierce animals and the normal victims of their ferocity. Isaiah discussed nature, but he had in mind the transformation of Israel.

> And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim. But they shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines toward the west; they shall spoil them of the east together: they shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab; and the children of Ammon shall obey them (Isa. 11:11–14).

Paul's words also invoke nature. Deliverance takes place in nature, not merely in society. The metaphor is not a metaphor after all. Or is it? Is Paul merely retaining the metaphorical character of Isaiah's messianic prophecy about animals? Is he saying that human society will alone be delivered from sin? Is nature really going to change? Paul's message is that there will someday be a removal of God's curse on nature. The creation was placed under bondage by Adam's Fall. Adam judicially represented nature (Gen. 1:26–28).[4] Nature came under a curse placed by God on Adam. The principle of subordination is basic to the biblical covenant.[5] Those who are under the authority of a superior suffer when he does, or triumph when he does. Paul here refers back to Genesis 3, not to Isaiah 11.

Isaiah 65:17–20 prophesied an era in history in which children will die at age one hundred. This indicates a restoration of man's pre-Flood lifespan. There will be a transformation of human biology that enables men to live much longer. It is not said that this will be a scientific breakthrough, although it could be. Paul is saying that the creation under man will participate in a comparable removal of the effects of sin. The curse of God will be progressively removed from man and nature. Isaiah did not say that only the redeemed will be blessed with longer lifespans. So will sinners. This indicates that Isaiah was not speaking of Israel alone, but of mankind in general. *The process of redemption will affect all mankind*. This does not mean that every person will be redeemed, for sinners will still be sinners. It does mean that mankind's world, including human biology, will be transformed. It means that God's common grace will bring blessings to all.[6]

Why should the creation be relieved from some of the effects of God's curse? Because mankind is partially delivered from sin. But why should mankind be partially delivered? Because of God's grace of progressive sanctification in human society. As men become less rebellious against God, God will begin to bless both them and nature. He will remove the biological limitation that He imposed in order to restrain the evil behavior of mankind: short lifetimes. Moses wrote of his era, which applies to ours: "For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be

4. North, *Sovereignty and Dominion*, chaps. 3, 4.
5. Sutton, *That You May Prosper*, ch. 2.
6. Gary North, *Dominion and Common Grace: The Biblical Basis of Progress* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987).

fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away" (Ps. 90:9–10). Yet at age 130, Jacob called his days short (Gen. 47:9). Moses saw the shortened lifespan as a curse on mankind. Isaiah said that this curse will be reversed.

C. Progressive Social Sanctification

Paul's words imply that there will be a time when the gospel will be so widely believed that most men will structure their outward behavior in terms of it. The revelation of the sons of men will be widespread. What at first is limited to the church will spread to all mankind. Jeremiah prophesied:

> Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name (Jer. 31:31–35).

The author of Hebrews applies this prophecy to the church. "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. 8:10–12). This is why the Old Covenant order is about to disappear, he says. "Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away" (Heb. 8:13). It is being replaced. And so it was, in A.D. 70.

The church is international. It is no longer geographically bottled up in Palestine. This is why Isaiah's prophecies regarding nature (Isa. 11:1–9) and man (Isa. 65:17–20) can be fulfilled in history. The knowledge of God's law—not just the work of the law in all men's hearts (Rom. 2:15)[7]—will become widespread. The curse on nature will be progressively removed because God's law will be progressively obeyed.

This is *progressive social sanctification*. The social laws of God will be progressively obeyed. This will bring His positive social sanctions in history. This is what Isaiah prophesied. It is within this prophetic context that Paul's discussion of the redemption of the creation should be understood. Full redemption must await the post-resurrection New Heaven and New Earth (Rev. 21, 22). But partial redemption of nature is not only possible, it is prophetically inevitable.

As to whether this visible redemption will be accomplished by science or by God's direct intervention, Paul does not say. Neither did Isaiah.

D. Economic Growth

God placed Adam under a curse in order to make his work less productive. "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field" (Gen. 3:18). The curse on nature was a curse on Adam. Nevertheless, in all of God's temporal curses, there is grace present.[8] Adam's reduced production gave him an incentive to cooperate with others to increase their individual output. "Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up" (Eccl. 4:9–10). This incentive for cooperation increases the cost of murder and war. The curse on fallen man and his environment can in some cases reduce the level of violence.

Cooperation among men is comparable to a joint effort between man and nature. It makes men wealthier. Any reduction in the resistance of nature in surrendering her fruits increases men's wealth. Paul here prophesies a future in which nature will be delivered from its present groaning. *This is necessarily a forecast of increased economic output*.

Nature was cursed by God in order to pressure men to cooperate. Because men can increase their wealth through cooperation, men co-

7. Chapter 3.
8. North, *Dominion and Common Grace*, ch. 2.

operate. If the curse of nature is reduced, there will not be so great a need for men's cooperation. The closer society approaches zero prices for factors of production, tastes remaining equal, the less need for the division of labor. But if the increase in nature's productivity is in response to mankind's greater covenant-keeping, as this passage suggests will be the case, then the result is greater dominion rather than increased leisure. Output rises, and people use this greater output to subdue the earth less expensively. In contrast, if nature's output should increase apart from covenant-keeping, its increased output will lead to reduced cooperation. Men will pursue more leisure. They will not feel the same environmental pressure to cooperate in order to increase their individual wealth. So, the cause of the increase is significant in assessing its results. An increase in nature's output will have different effects, depending on men's ethical commitment and vision of the future.

Economic growth is a positive sanction attached to God's covenant law. The early sections of both Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 list blessings for corporate obedience. These passages include increased economic growth. "Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store" (Deut. 28:4–5).[9] "The LORD shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto; and he shall bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee" (Deut. 28:8). Paul is forecasting a time when the earth will provide more of its wealth to men. This is part of a general removal of Adam's curse.

Because God had given Israel *a vision of linear history*, from the original creation to the expansion of God's kingdom, the Israelites had *the foundation of a doctrine of progress*. Deuteronomy 28 applied progress to economic affairs. Paul here extends this hope to the world at large. It is not just the land of Israel that will be blessed. It will be the whole earth. The gentiles can participate.

This passage is a standing testimony against those who declare that there should be laws passed to restrict economic growth. They are arguing against the blessings of God. They are attempting to overturn this prophecy in the name of wealth-redistribution by agents of the state.

9. Gary North, *Inheritance and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Deuteronomy*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1999] 2012), ch. 69.

There are reasons for this hostility to economic growth. If economic growth is legitimate, then population growth is legitimate. The modern secular West hates population growth. This is why abortion has become legal in the West. Sinners seek an increase in their personal wealth by killing their own children. Collectively, they seek an increase in their per capita wealth—their lifestyle—by killing their unborn children. They also see that the continual expansion of population in a finite world points to the end of time. They rightly fear God's final judgment. Filling the earth with people means fulfilling the God's dominion covenant given to Adam (Gen. 1:26–28) and Noah (Gen. 9:1–2).[10] Covenant-breakers seek to delay God's final judgment by turning back both economic growth and population growth. They seek to escape their duties under God's dominion covenant. Here is the underlying theology of the zero-growth movement: *deferring God's final judgment*.

Conclusion

Paul prophesied the redemption of nature from God's curse. Nature had come under a curse because of Adam, Paul said. "For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope" (Rom. 8:20). But a second Adam has come, Jesus Christ. He has reversed the curse definitively. "For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Rom. 5:17–19). What Christ began at His resurrection will be extended in history. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (I Cor. 15:22–26).[11] The reign of Christ will progressively over-

10. *North, Sovereignty* and Dominion, ch. 18.

11. Gary North, *Judgment and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on First Corinthians*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2001] 2012), ch. 16.

come His enemies in history, culminating in the triumph over death at the final judgment. Death is the last enemy to be overcome. This means that before death is finally overcome at the end of history, the curses associated with Adam's fall will be overcome.

Paul was saying that the gospel will be extended throughout the earth, and to the extent that man's society is redeemed by special grace, so will nature be redeemed by common grace. Nature will come under the reign of Christ. The prophecies in Isaiah 11 will be fulfilled. So will the prophecies in Isaiah 65.

6

THE ORIGIN OF SOCIAL ORDER

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

ROMANS 8:28

The theocentric focus of this verse is the absolute sovereignty of God over every aspect of history.[1] Those who love God can legitimately be confident about the beneficial personal outcomes of their decisions. They can also be confident that God will thwart the outcomes of the decisions of God's covenantal enemies. God providentially sustains the universe in such a way that His people will be victorious in the end. Every fact of history leads to this victorious end.

A. Good Results from Evil Decisions

Paul says here that all things work for good for God's elect—not just a few things, but all things. There is no indication in the text that "all" means anything except "all." Even the painful things that afflict covenant-keepers in history are for their good, just as Paul's thorn in the flesh was for his good (II Cor. 12). *The universe is completely rigged by God in favor of God and His people*. It is inherently good, but only for those who love God, who are called according to His purpose. For covenant-breakers, the reverse is true: all things in history work against them in eternity. "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36).

1. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1987] 1992), ch. 1. Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory*, 5th ed. (Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision, [1980] 2010), ch. 1.

It takes enormous faith to believe this. It flies in the face of many visible facts in the lives of Christians. In the chapter immediately preceding his discussion of the thorn in his flesh, Paul wrote of his own experience: "Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?" (II Cor. 11:23–29). Nevertheless, Paul tells us here that all things work for the good of those who love God. To believe this requires the adoption of a personal eschatology of victory. In fact, no passage in the Bible is more expressive of a personal eschatology of victory than this one. This verse is the great affirmation of personal victory.

The cross is the supreme example of this two-fold process of historical causation. It initially appeared to bring an ignominious end to Jesus' ministry. His enemies believed that it had. So did His disciples. They scattered. The cross was so horrendous a prospect that Jesus asked God the Father that this burden might be kept from Him (Matt. 26:39). Nevertheless, without Jesus' bodily victory over death after the cross, there would be no guarantee of the promise of Romans 8:28. Paul wrote this twice: "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain" (I Cor. 15:14). "And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" (I Cor. 15:17). Christ's bodily resurrection is the legal foundation for covenant-keepers' confidence regarding the comprehensive, one-sided benevolence of the providence of God.

Jesus said of Judas before the betrayal, "And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!" (Luke 22:22). Judas had his goal and motivation; God had His. The Jewish leaders had their motivation; God had His. "Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all

men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death" (John 11:47–53).

1. Joseph in Egypt

Consider the story of Joseph in Egypt. Things turned out very differently from what his brothers had planned for him, as well as what Potiphar had planned for him. After their father died, Joseph's brothers feared that Joseph would impose vengeance on them. They had kidnapped him and then sold him to slave traders. Now he was second in command in Egypt, and they were dependent on Egypt for food. "And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him" (Gen. 50:15). "And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive" (Gen. 50:19–20).

Here we have the clearest statement in the Old Testament regarding the superiority of God's decree over the plans of men. Man proposes, but God disposes. There is no doubt that the brothers had acted in an evil manner. Their intentions had been evil. Yet their actions resulted in their blessing. Joseph assured them, "Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them" (v. 21). Out of evil came good—not just for Joseph but for the brothers, too. Their decision to sell him to slave traders became the means of their families' deliverance from famine.

The Pharaoh of the exodus provides another example of evil's producing good, though not for the perpetrator. His refusal to allow the Israelites to make a three-day journey to sacrifice to God led to their complete deliverance from Egypt. This was God's doing. "And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had spoken unto Moses" (Ex. 9:12). In the next

chapter of Romans, Paul uses this example in his defense of God's absolute sovereignty in God's electing some to salvation and some to perdition. "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth" (Rom. 9:16–17). Pharaoh had his priorities; God had His. God's were triumphant.

God was sovereign over the decisions of the brothers, Joseph said. God had intended their actions for good. The brothers had an evil motivation, and this had led to their action. This evil action led to other evil actions: lies by Potiphar's wife, forgetfullness by the Pharaoh's butler. Each evil action put Joseph closer to the office of deliverer. God had not only intended the brothers' evil actions for good, He had intended all of the evil actions that had afflicted Joseph to result in good for the family of Jacob. The brothers and their families would be blessed. God had predestinated the entire process. This is what Joseph told his brothers. There had never been any doubt in God's mind about the outcome of this series of decisions by people whose intentions were evil. They had their goals; God had His. They had their motivations; God had His. Both God's motivation and His goal were for good for the sons of Jacob. Joseph told them that they had done evil, but the results were good. Joseph honored God's goal. He did not seek to avenge himself on them. In imagining otherwise, they had thought evil of him, again. They were wrong, again.

B. Coordination from Above

The doctrine of God's absolute predestination undergirds Paul's promise in Romans 8:28. In Romans 9, he spells out this doctrine in detail. God is the grand coordinator of all events. Because the free-will theology of Arminianism is today almost universal in Christian circles, even as Calvinism had been almost universal in Protestant circles in the days of Arminius, Christians refuse to accept the plain teaching of these passages. They may give lip service to them, but they do not emotionally and intellectually accept them. They do not believe Paul when Paul writes: "And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the

younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid" (Rom. 9:10–14). Before Esau had done good or evil, God hated him. And why not? Esau was an heir of Adam. The amazing fact is that God loved Jacob, not that he hated Esau. But the Arminian reverses this assessment. He is amazed that God hated Esau. He is more than amazed; he does not believe it. But the text is quite clear. God hated Esau in the womb. Calvinist commentator John Murray has commented on this passage. "Since the oracle points to a discrimination that existed before the children were born or had done good or evil (vs. 11), so must the differentiation in the present instance. Thus the definitive actions denoted by 'love' and 'hatred' are represented as actuated not by any character differences in the two children but solely by the sovereign will of God, 'the purpose of God according to election' (vs. 11)."[2] The Bible teaches that there is coordination from above. There are human actions in history, but coordination is imposed by God from beyond history. God is completely in charge.

> I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else. I am the LORD, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things. Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the LORD have created it. Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands? Woe unto him that saith unto his father, What begettest thou? or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth? (Isa. 45:5–10)

Paul paraphrased this passage in chapter 9 of Romans. "Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" (Rom. 9:19–21). Murray writes: "The similitude is that of the potter making vessels of different character from the same lump of clay, one to serve a

2. John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1959, 1965), II, p. 23.

high purpose, another a less noble. No one questions his right to make these distinctions. He has not merely the power; he has the *authority*."[3]

There is an objective decree over history: God's. His decree is not a matter of guesswork on God's part. Neither is its outcome. His decree comes to pass in history. "The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand" (Isa. 14:24). With his sanity restored after seven years of madness, Nebuchadnezzar announced: "And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" (Dan. 4:35). The coordination of human affairs and nonhuman affairs is theocratic: God rules. There is a one-to-one correlation between what God proposes and what God disposes.

C. The Source of Economic Order

Social theorists who deny Augustinianism/Calvinism must offer some other theory of social coordination. These theorists search for cause-and-effect patterns within the creation that provide an explanation for the presence of social order in the midst of innumerable events that no man can begin to comprehend, and which no god is allowed to interfere with except sporadically. They search for an explanation for the correspondence between the one and the many, between the social order and the myriad decisions of individuals. Every time a new explanatory system is suggested by some social theorist or historian, it is refuted by other theorists as being insufficient as an explanatory device.

Adam Smith made famous the phrase, "the invisible hand." His metaphor was supposed to explain how it is possible for public good to emerge from self-interested decisions by individuals who buy and sell.[4] This metaphor invoked an image of an all-powerful God along the lines of Scottish Presbyterian Calvinism. But Smith did not believe in Calvin's God. He believed in a more deistic sort of God, more

3. *Ibid.*, II, p. 32.

4. "Every individual necessarily labors to render the annual revenue of the society as great as he can. He generally indeed neither intends to promote the public interest, nor knows how much he is promoting it. He intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention. By pursuing his own interest he frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it." Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (New York: Modern Library, [1776]), p. 432.

Newtonian than Calvinistic. He did not believe that God personally intervenes in history to bring social utility out of individual utility, social order out of seeming chaos. He believed that the free market performs this crucial service. Yet he used the metaphor of an invisible hand. A century later, Darwin adopted the same rhetorical strategy. He denied that nature has goals, yet his language of natural selection implied that something did the selecting. He compared nature to a professional breeder, even as he denied that nature did any such thing.

Smith was part of the eighteenth-century Scottish Enlightenment. He and his intellectual peers believed in undesigned social evolution. Smith's intellectual predecessor Adam Ferguson had argued in the mid-eighteenth century that society is the outcome of human actions, but not of human design.[5] There is no designer of social order. Darwin used this insight a century later to structure his theory of evolution through natural selection. Darwin taught that there is no cosmic designer; nevertheless, there is biological order.[6]

A rival view of the Scottish Enlightenment's theory of decentralized social order was more common on the European continent, especially in France. Order was seen as the product of rationalism. The French Enlightenment believed that the state can and should direct the economy into profitable lines—for the state. This had been the view of the mercantilists for at least a century by 1776. It became the view of the French revolutionaries under Robespierre. It has been the view of socialists, communists, and Keynesian economists ever since.

Hayek contrasted these two views of Enlightenment rationalism in his book, *The Counter-Revolution of Science* (1954). The debate continues, though with much less confidence on the part of the defenders of government planning than existed before the visible collapse of the Soviet Union's economy in the late 1980s and the collapse of the Soviet government itself in late 1991. Socialists may today be willing to accept grudgingly the fact that the free market is more efficient than socialism in the delivery of goods and services to customers, but they deny that the initial distribution of wealth was morally just. Those who have the money to consume do not *deserve* to consume all

5. F. A. Hayek, *New Studies in Philosophy, Politics, Economics and the History of Ideas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 264. This is from Ferguson's book, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767), p. 187.

6. Ibid. pp. 264–65. This is an essay on the influence of Bernard Mandeville's famous poem and his commentary, *Fable of the Bees*. See Gary North, *Hierarchy and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on First Timothy*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2001] 2012), Appendix C.

that they consume, the socialist-interventionist argues. Thus, the free market's greater efficiency is not good enough for the socialist—good enough in all senses: social, moral, and economic. There must also be fair play—non-market intervention by the state—in order to establish a just society. State coercion is required to redistribute wealth and thereby ensure morally fair outcomes of individual decision-making in the marketplace.

Individual economic decisions to buy and sell can and do produce a stable economic order. This is no longer widely debated. On this point, the intellectual defenders of the free market triumphed in the final decade of the twentieth century, a triumph that did not seem remotely possible in 1974, the year that Hayek won the Nobel Prize in economic science, which he shared with the socialist, Gunnar Myrdal. Hayek was taken far more seriously in the final decade of the twentieth century (he died in 1992) than he was in 1974. Before 1974, he was not taken seriously by most economists, and he was regarded as an anomalous throwback to the nineteenth century by the few non-economists in the academic community who had heard of him.[7] The conservative book publisher, Henry Regnery, in 1975 described the American academic community's treatment of *The Road to Serfdom*, Hayek's most famous and best-written book.[8]

> In 1944 the University of Chicago Press published an unassuming looking scholarly book without fanfare of any kind and in a very small first printing, which soon became the center of discussion and shook the liberal position to its foundations. This was F. A. Hayek's *Road to Serfdom*. It had first been published in England—Hayek at the time was professor of economics at the University of London [error: London School of Economics]–and had been rejected by several American trade publishers, in one case on the basis of the report of a reader who stated that, although he thought the book would enjoy a good sale, it was "unfit for publication by a reputable house."[9] The thesis of the book, simply stated, was that centralized economic planning—socialism, in other words—must inevitably lead to complete collectivism and the loss of personal freedom. The book was quite obviously the work of a serious scholar whose interest was not

7. The most notorious example is Herman Finer's long-forgotten book, *The Road to Reaction* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1945), written by a political scientist at the University of Chicago, whose faculty Hayek joined in 1945. Presumably, Finer wrote it before Hayek arrived in the United States, and before he received the offer to join the tiny Committee on Social Thought, but not the Economics Department.

8. Henry Regnery, "The Age of Liberalism," *Modern Age*, XIX (Spring 1975).

9. From a letter to W. T. Couch from William Miller, quoted in "The Sainted Book Burners," *The Freeman*, April 1955, p. 423.

> indulgence in ideological polemics but the preservation of the free society. The *New York Times*, to its everlasting credit and the astonishment of many, gave the book an excellent and favorable review in a prominent place by Henry Hazlitt, and the *Reader's Digest* made its ideas widely available by means of a skillful condensation. Such attention quickly mobilized a counterattack. Alvin H. Hansen, then much quoted as a "leading authority" on economic questions, pronounced categorically in the pages of the *New Republic*: "Hayek's book will not be long lived. There is no substance in it to make it long lived."[10] The *Library Journal* spoke of its "abstract presentation and poor organization"[11] but the major attack came from Professor Herman Finer of the University of Chicago in a polemical, abusive book called *The Road to Reaction*, which is of much less interest now, except as a period piece, than the acclaim it inspired. The Kirkus Book Review Service, which was then, and still is, widely used by libraries in the selection of books, described the Finer book as "An exciting book—and a much needed one—the atomic bomb to explode the thesis of the reactionaries' Mein Kampf, Hayek's *Road to Serfdom*.[12] In the *New York Times*, S. E. Harris of the Harvard faculty of economics welcomed Finer's polemic with the words, "This brilliant, persuasive volume . . . exposes his [Hayek's] fallacies and errors of fact." Finer, of course, was "a world authority," and his book one "no reader can afford to disregard."[13]

Of Herman Finer's intellectual legacy there remains barely a trace. The climate of opinion has blown him into a well-deserved obscurity, and has taken Seymour Harris with him.[14] Hayek is correctly regarded as one of the most important intellectuals of the twentieth century.[15]

The debate today is over ethics: the moral legitimacy of the outcome of market transactions. There is also the secondary issue of market failure, especially economic recessions. Here, most economists agree: there is a legitimate role for the state, especially the state-granted monopoly of central banking. But the role of civil government is today viewed as limited, more supplementary than determinative.[16] This represents an intellectual victory of the Scottish Enlightenment over the French Revolution's Enlightenment. Today,

10. *The New Republic*, January 1, 1945.

11. *The Library journal*, September 15, 1944.

12. Kirkus Book Review Service, September 15, 1945.

13. *New York Times*, December 9, 1945.

14. The best test of obscurity is a Wikipedia entry. Finer's has five sentences, only two of which discuss him. Harris has no entry (January 2021).

15. My Google search in January 2021 produced 3.3 million hits. I interviewed him in the summer of 1985. It is posted on YouTube: youtube.com/watch?v=ZMlyk089rig (accessed January 16, 2021).

16. Robert H. Nelson, *Economics as Religion: from Samuelson to Chicago and Beyond* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001).

there is not much opposition to Smith's basic insight that a productive form of economic order predictably arises from the decisions of individuals to enter into voluntary exchange. Out of billions of exchanges arises a recognizable market order. Although no one planned this order, it nevertheless exists. It provides the means of subsistence and far more than mere subsistence. There is coordination through the price system. Hayek called this the spontaneous order. This view of society is evolutionistic.[17]

D. Coordination and Cooperation

Hayek's theory of social order rests on the insight of the Scottish Enlightenment rationalists, especially Ferguson, that the coordination of society is unplanned. It is the unintended product of individual human action. This is a powerful argument, though it is difficult to believe for most people. When most men hear the words, "invisible hand," they imagine a god or demon that pushes people around. The metaphor is either not understood as a metaphor or else it is not understood at all. The same problem of perception undermines Darwin's metaphor of nature as an animal breeder. It makes nature sound providential or at least scheming—the exact opposite of what Darwin was arguing.

When men see a watch, they think "watchmaker." When men see order, they think "planner." They find it comforting to attribute social order to a benevolent administrator. If this administrator is not supernatural, then he must be a bureaucrat. He must have planned, decreed, and brought to pass. Yet it is obvious that no administrator coordinates the complex affairs of the market. *But if there is no administrator, how can men be confident in the benevolence of the system*? This is the rhetorical question that socialists have asked ever since the early nineteenth century. They keep offering the same conclusion: *people's confidence in the free market is misplaced*. The familiar phrase, "President Roosevelt saved capitalism from itself" is representative. The capitalist order is neither self-sustaining nor self-justifying, its critics insist. They seek an administrator who can secure the benevolence of the system. This is true in the realm of cosmology.[18] It is also true in the realm of economics.

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17. Gary North, *Sovereignty and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Genesis* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1982] 2012), Appendix B.

18. Michael J. Denton, *Nature's Destiny: How the Laws of Biology Reveal Purpose in the Universe* (New York: Free Press, 1998). Denton was Senior Research Fellow in molecular genetics at the University of Otago in New Zealand.

Ethics is important. Legitimacy is important. Appeals to economic efficiency have not answered the nagging doubts of the masses, let alone professors of sociology. Men want to believe that things will work out well for them. They want a world in which their children will have an opportunity to live happily ever after. It takes an act of faith to believe in the benevolence of an impersonal market that is the product of human action but not design. There is a tendency for men to search out inherent defects in the market order—"market failures," as they are called—in order to assure themselves that the market is not autonomous, that it responds positively to creative political tinkering, that administrators can make it better and secure the benevolence that systemic impersonalism cannot guarantee. Men do not wish to entrust their futures to impersonalism, whether cosmic or economic.

When men trust each other, there is greater cooperation. The institutional cost of policing deception and unreliable performance falls. The degree of trust in a society, and its distribution among contending institutions, dramatically shape and limits a national economy. The chief issue here is the division of labor—social cooperation. Where trust is lacking in institutions, economies remain backward, limited to family businesses and local trade.[19] *The degree of men's faith in the* ***benevolence*** *of the economic order affects the degree of social cooperation*. If they believe that things will go well for them in the end, they are more willing to invest time and money in present projects than if they suspect that things may go badly. *This is why* ***optimism*** *regarding the long-term benevolence of the social order in the broadest sense is so important in calling forth men's commitment*. When people believe that the system is stacked against them, they will seek for ways to beat the system. One of the major ways that they attempted to beat the system in the twentieth century was to transfer their allegiance to the state.

Men also want to believe that positive outcomes are a product of moral behavior. They want to believe that right makes might, that truth will triumph over lies, that honesty is the best policy. They want to believe that their sacrifice on behalf of morality will be rewarded, at least in heaven but preferably in history. They are convinced that the relationship between justice and earthly success must be enforced by someone in authority. If this is not God, then it has to be someone with a great deal of political power. Men do not readily believe that

19. Francis Fukuyama, *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* (New York: Macmillan, 1995).

impersonal market forces, described by value-free economists, are reliable enforcers of moral cause and effect.

E. The Need for Legitimacy

Academic economists assure the public and their students that their science is value-free. They insist that they are not coming in the name of a higher morality. On this point, they are self-deluded. There is no neutrality. Every social theory rests on a view of moral cause and effect. Every social theory offers a system of law and a system of sanctions.

For example, the anarcho-capitalist denies the legitimacy of civil law. He offers a theory of customer sovereignty that places negative economic sanctions into the hands of customers: their legal authority to refuse to buy. Profit and loss are the system's sanctions. To defend this system intellectually, the anarcho-capitalist equates customer sovereignty with moral right. It is regarded as morally wrong—unjust—for the civil government to interfere with private ownership and the right of contract: an act of theft. But why is theft wrong? Why is an economic order that promotes such theft illegitimate? The theory rests on morality that is outside the market. Rothbard recognized this. He was an Aristotelian. But most economists, including Mises, prefer to appeal to utilitarianism rather than morality. They invoke efficiency rather than morality.

Free market economists come in the name of buyer's sovereignty: "high bid wins." They also come in the name of seller's efficiency: "low bid wins." This is the famous law of supply and demand. Economists favor certain government policies. They speak of social utility as if they or others who use scientific economics can add up the utilities of individuals, and then subtract from this total all individual disutilities. They assume that they can make scientifically valid interpersonal comparisons of subjective utility.[20] They are wrong on this point. They cannot make such comparisons scientifically. Their methodological individualism prevents this. They cannot, as neutral scientists, move from individual value scales to corporate value scales. There is no common utility scale. There is no measure of individual utility. There are rankings—"first, second, third"—but no measure: "how much more."

Thus, they cannot legitimately invoke social utility in their defense of the free market's social order. At best, they can defend the individual

20. Lionel Robbins, *An Essay on the Nature and Significance of Economic Science*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, [1932] 1945), ch. VI.

property owner against theft. But even here, some free market economists are unwilling to do this. The school of thought known as law and economics specifically denies the suggestion that civil judges must always defend the existing property rights of owners. Instead, they say, judges must use social utility as their guide, determining who owes whom what payment based on the maximization of social utility.[21]

Social theorists continue to debate the moral legitimacy of the outcomes of economic decisions by profit-seeking individuals. Most men want to believe that they are doing the right thing. Economists want to believe that their recommended form of society honors valid, authoritative standards of justice. Yet they also want to separate economic science from all moral and theological assumptions, just as physics supposedly is separated. Academic defenders of the free market necessarily must surrender the case for justice whenever they come in the name of value-free economic analysis. But this is how almost all economists come.

Adam Smith did not attempt to prove in *The Wealth of Nations* the moral legitimacy of the outcome of free-market competition. He assumed that all men prefer greater wealth as individuals. That is, men will choose a lower price over a higher price, other things being equal. He used this motivation to describe the increasing wealth of nations as the result of allowing individuals to pursue their economic self-interest through trade. Smith's economics rests on the idea of ever-increasing wealth as a legitimate goal of both individuals and nations. To the extent that the pursuit of wealth is not a self-validating moral goal, Smith's economics lacks moral legitimacy.

Jesus taught that the pursuit of ever-increasing individual wealth is not a legitimate goal, if it is a man's only goal or his main goal.[22] Yet Smith in *The Wealth of Nations*, in contrast to his earlier book, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), offered no analytical tool other than the pursuit of individual wealth. Economists have rarely read *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, and the morality-based analytical tools suggested in that book were not developed by Smith in *The Wealth of Nations*.[23] Modern economics rests on an assumption: more is better than less because individuals want more. Jesus taught that more is worse than

21. Gary North, *Authority and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Exodus* (Dallas, Georgia Point Five Press, 2012), Part 3, *Tools of Dominion* (1990), Appendix H.

22. Gary North, *Treasure and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Luke*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012).

23. Gary North, *Hierarchy and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on First Timothy*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2001] 2012), Appendix C.

less if individuals pursue only this world's wealth. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal" (Matt. 6:19–20).[24] "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" (Matt. 16:26a).[25]

Smith explained the social market order in terms of men's pursuit of individual self-interest. He demonstrated that national wealth is normally increased by adopting the political policy of laissez-faire, but he proved this by implicitly assuming that it is analytically possible to add up individual wealth to compare aggregate wealth among nations. He offered a strong case for the idea that economic order is the result of individual decisions far more than it is the result of central planning by government bureaucrats. But this argument from description did not make the case for the moral legitimacy of the corporate outcome produced by the free market.

F. The Good Society

Paul here sets forth the case for the comprehensive providence of God. It is a beneficent providence for covenant-keepers. All things work for good for covenant-keepers. This is true in every period of history, under every social order. This means that providence is malignant for covenant-breakers: vessels of dishonor. "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" (Rom. 9:18–21).

The question then arises: Is one social system superior to another? If all things work together for good, does it make any difference which social order is dominant? It surely mattered under the Mosaic Covenant. Biblical law was mandatory for Mosaic Israel. God also sent Jonah to Nineveh to call that nation to repentance. In modern times, Christians have abandoned Old Testament law in the name of…what? They do not say. All they say is that the Mosaic law was

24. Gary North, *Priorities and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Matthew*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 13.
25. *Ibid.*, ch. 35.

temporary and confined to Israel, and therefore it must be completely abandoned unless the New Testament revives one or another of the Mosaic statutes. (The New Testament does not revive the Mosaic statute against bestiality,[26] so New Testament antinomians conveniently ignore bestiality as a legal issue.) They have concluded that any social order is superior to the one that God revealed to Moses. They assure us that Christians can live holy lives under any social order, except one—the Mosaic law—which is wrong to defend because God has annulled it. They attack biblical law—and only biblical law—in the name of Christ. They proclaim, "We're under grace, not law!" In fact, they are today under humanistic lawyers and bureaucrats.

This hostility to the Mosaic law has left Christians as defenders of this or that system of humanist economics. Generally, most of them defend the economic status quo: either the academic status quo or the political status quo. Those few Christians who have attended graduate school in the social sciences or humanities tend to be more socialistic than the people in the pews, but neither group believes that the Mosaic law sets forth fundamental principles of social and economic order. They do not believe that the Bible provides a blueprint for economics. They may selectively defend this or that Old Testament law, but only as an example of the "Christian spiritual attitude." There is no attempt to look at the whole of the Mosaic law and then use it to develop a framework for jurisprudence. This is why no one wrote an economic commentary on the Bible before mine. The same holds true for other academic disciplines: education, political science, sociology, law.

Thus, Christian social theory has not previously been Bible-based. It has been humanistic and eclectic. Except for the theonomists, Christian social theorists do not come in the name of God and His written revelation to declare the nature of the good society. They have surrendered social theory to humanists. They have baptized this or that humanist theory, usually one that is a decade or more out of date in humanist circles. They have not sought to develop a uniquely biblical social theory. The New Testament does not offer sufficient guidance, they say, and the Old Testament is not to be trusted.

This has created a condition in which Christians have been excluded, with their consent, from debates about the good society.

26. "And if a man lie with a beast, he shall surely be put to death: and ye shall slay the beast. And if a woman approach unto any beast, and lie down thereto, thou shalt kill the woman, and the beast: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them" (Lev. 20:15–16).

Since about 1700, Christians have had to choose between right-wing Enlightenment social theory and left-wing Enlightenment social theory. They have baptized Locke, Smith, Burke and their disciples, or else Rousseau, Marx, Sorel, and their disciples—all filtered through the cosmic impersonalism of Darwinism.

In Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28, we read of God's corporate sanctions in history. The covenantal issue in both passages is society's obedience to God's specially revealed civil law, not just civil law in general. If Christians reject the idea of God's predictable corporate sanctions in history, they are left intellectually defenseless in the debate over social theory. This has been the case for three centuries. Before 1700, they were compromised by Aristotelian categories imported by the medieval scholastics.

Today, a tiny minority of Protestant Christians have begun to understand that there is no neutrality. Nevertheless, they still remain defenders of "equal time for Jesus." They do not perceive that the humanists' "equal time" doctrine was historically conditioned. It was formulated to silence the few traces of Christianity that still remained in public discourse. The slogan was always an illusion. This became obvious in the early 1920s in the United States when William Jennings Bryan challenged the right of tax-funded schools to teach Darwinism. He lost.[27] Today, it is illegal to teach anything in taxr-funded schools regarding origins except materialistic evolution. There is no neutrality. But the moment that a Christian declares, "There is no neutrality," he faces a question: "If not biblical law, then what?" Modern Christians hate this question. They hate it almost as much as they hate this question: "If God hardened Pharaoh's heart, why was Pharaoh responsible?" Paul answered this question in Romans 9.

> For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? (Rom. 9:17–21)

27. Gary North, *Crossed Fingers: How the Liberals Captured the Presbyterian Church* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1996), ch. 7.

Conclusion

God predestinates all things to work together in order to benefit covenant-keepers. God proposes, and God disposes. Men have their purposes; God has His. God's are absolute. Men's are conditioned.

Paul makes it clear that God brings His decree to pass in history. Men are responsible for what they think and do, but God brings all things to pass according to His decree. "And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!" (Luke 22:22) There is order in history. God provides it. Men make individual decisions, but God directs the outcome. "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will" (Prov. 21:1). God is absolutely sovereign; men are nonetheless responsible. This is what Paul teaches. He is rarely believed.

This passage is important for social theory. It teaches that there is social order despite individual decisions. Men make plans; God brings His plan to pass. *The source of social order is the decree of God*. Any theoretical system of cause and effect that does not rest on the decree of God is man's attempt to escape Paul's plain teaching in Romans 8 and 9.

Adam Smith explained social order as the product of self-interested decision-making by individuals. He established this as the methodological starting point of modern economics. It is a powerful paradigm, and it has steadily triumphed over rival views. But his conclusion rests on assumptions that are inconsistent with methodological individualism. His disciples cannot prove scientifically that increased wealth is a morally legitimate ideal, or that economic growth benefits the whole society. Smith's analytical tools in *Wealth of Nations* left no place for morality, which is the basis of social legitimacy. The free market social order is the product of certain legal arrangements, but their legitimacy is still debated. There is no religious neutrality when it comes to morals. There is therefore no religious neutrality when it comes to the wealth of nations.

7

THE REDEMPTION OF THE JEWS AND KINGDOM BLESSINGS

What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day. And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompence unto them: Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway. I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?

ROMANS 11:7–12

The theocentric focus of this passage is God's judgment: point four of the biblical covenant.[1] The issue: His providential administration of Israel: Old Covenant Israel and New Covenant Israel. It raises a secondary issue: God's providential administration of the Jews in between the demise of Old Covenant Israel and their incorporation into New Covenant Israel.

A. Separation and Integration

A continuing theme in Romans is the separation of Christians from the covenant-breaking world. This raises a question that Paul deals with in the first two chapters in Romans: On what basis can separated Christians be part of the general culture? His answer is two-fold: *common hu-*

1. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1987] 1992), ch. 4. Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory*, 5th ed. (Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision, 2010), ch. 4.

manity and *common revelation*. All men are made in God's image. They have all been given general revelation. They see nature, and nature testifies to God (Rom. 1:18).[2] There is also a common judicial revelation: the work of the law written on all human hearts (Rom. 2:14–15).[3] Because of their *shared humanity in Adam*, Christians and non-Christians can cooperate. All men possess a common revelation in nature and a common understanding of God's ethical requirements. Covenant-keepers and covenant-breakers are covenantally separate, but mankind is still united, almost as competing half brothers are united, Paul preached in Athens: a shared father. God, he said, "hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation" (Acts 17:26). Also, the dominion covenant that God made with Adam is still binding (Gen. 1:26–28).[4] It still unites humanity.

In Romans 9–11, but especially 11, Paul raises a related issue: the separation of the Jews. The Old Covenant separated Jews from gentiles. The New Covenant separates Christians from non-Christians. But what of the disinherited (Matt. 21:43) sons of the Old Covenant? The Jews were still a political force when Paul wrote to the church in Rome. At the Jerusalem council, the church had formally broken with the "taste not, touch not" aspects of the Mosaic law (Acts 15), but a final break with the Old Covenant did not take place until A.D. 70, when the temple was destroyed by soldiers in the victorious Roman army.[5]

What of the covenantal separation after A.D. 70? Paul did not know when this separation would come, but he knew that it would be soon. The Old Covenant order would soon perish, he taught (Rom. 13:12). Were Jews then going to be dealt with by God as just another covenant-breaking people? There would be only two kinds of people, as always: covenant-keepers and covenant-breakers. But would there be covenantal distinctions among covenant-breakers? Would the Jews, as covenant-breakers, be dealt with by God as a separate people, analogous to the way that He had dealt with them under the Abrahamic Covenant and those covenants that followed, which were all part of

2. Chapter 2.

3. Chapter 3.

4. Gary North, *Sovereignty and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Genesis* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), chaps. 4, 5.

5. An Israeli fringe group, Temple Mount and the Land of Israel Faithful Movement, is attempting to begin the rebuilding of the temple on the property of the Dome of the Rock, the Arab mosque in Jerusalem. The group sees this as prophetically necessary. (www.templemountfaithful.org)

one covenant: the Old Covenant? If so, how could a clear-cut distinction be made between covenant-keepers and covenant-breakers?

This was another aspect of the separation-cooperation issue. The issue that Paul raises in Romans 11 is this: How will the church and Judaism interact in the future? Judaism would no longer be Old Covenant religion, for the Old Covenant was about to perish. After A.D. 70, Phariseeism triumphed over Sadduceeism, for the Sadducees had been associated closely with the administration of temple sacrifice.[6] Judaism replaced the religion that Christians refer to as Old Covenant religion. The Jews recognized this change, for the temple was no more. Their religion had to change, and it did change.

Paul was writing before this final separation had taken place, perhaps a decade before Nero's persecution of the church in A.D. 64 separated the church from Judaism in Roman law. The date of A.D. 55 is common for this epistle. [7] Paul raised this question: What would be the future relationship between Jews and Christians? In asking this, as well as by answering it, Paul recognized that there would be a three-way covenantal relationship in history, at least until the conversion of the Jews: New Covenant, Adamic Covenant, and Jewish Covenant. The Jews would continue to be dealt with by God as a separate people—separate from Christians, but also separate from covenant-breakers in general. Paul's teaching has complicated covenant theology by inserting a prophetic element into it.

Paul teaches in Romans 11 that there will be a three-way separation for an unspecified period of time. But, at some point in the future, this three-way separation will become two-way, just as it was before Christ's ministry. Jews as a separate people will be absorbed into the church. Jews will no longer be dealt with by God as a separate people.

B. God's Covenant People, Emeriti

Paul speaks here of Jews as a covenantal, corporate entity. In crucifying Jesus, Jews had rebelled against God as a corporate unit—nationally—although not all of them did. Paul had been one of these rebels.

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6. Louis Finkelstein, *The Pharisees: The Sociological Background of Their Faith*, 2 vols., 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1962), I, ch. XIII. After Rome's destruction of the temple in A.D. 70, the Sadducees disappeared. *The Encyclopedia of the Jewish Religion*, ed. R. J. Zvi and Geoffrey Wigoder (New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, 1965), p. 340. The Pharisees replaced them as the leaders of Judaism, which is the religion taught by the rabbis.

7. John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1959, 1965), I, p. xvi.

Paul teaches in Romans 11 that Jews will someday be redeemed as a corporate unit, though not necessarily all of them.

The logic of Paul's argument rests on a temporal contrast between the ways that God deals with Jews as a corporate entity. The contrast is between how God dealt with the Jews in Paul's day and how He will deal with them in a future era. In Paul's day, a few Jews had been granted salvation by God, but most had been deliberately blinded by God. Paul writes that "God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear; unto this day" (v. 8). As surely as God had hardened Pharaoh's heart, Paul says, so has He hardened the hearts of the majority of the Jews. Paul in this epistle had previously described what God did to Pharaoh. "For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth" (Rom. 9:15–18). The context of this discussion of Pharaoh was the blindness of the Jews in Paul's day.

> What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? As he saith also in Osee [Hosea], I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God. Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved: For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth. And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha. What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed (Rom. 9:22–33).

There was another corporate entity involved: the gentile church. God had dealt with gentiles differently prior to Christ's advent. They were outside of God's covenant of salvation. This was corporate discrimination. Now some of them were being grafted into His covenant, Paul explains here. The question Paul raises is this: What of the future? Will God deal with redeemed gentiles differently at some point? Paul's answer is yes. God will bless them as never before.

Paul is using two sets of contrasts to make a point. The first contrast is between (a) Jews who were corporately excluded from God's kingdom in Paul's day, and (b) Jews who will be corporately integrated into the church in the future. The second contrast is between (a) gentiles who were corporately excluded from God's kingdom before the era of the church, and (b) redeemed gentiles, who will be corporately blessed by God in the future. If we do not acknowledge and then accurately apply the corporate aspects of both contrasts, we miss the point of Romans 11.

C. The Conversion of the Jews

Paul in this chapter develops a unique argument. The Jews *as a people* have been cast aside by God, so that the gospel can come to gentiles *as a people*. The nation of Israel had long constituted God's visible earthly kingdom. In Paul's day, this visible kingdom was being transferred to a predominately gentile church, just as Christ had prophesied to the Jews: "Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. 21:43).

The Jews as a people are like a domesticated olive tree, Paul says. Its branches have been broken off, so that God can graft in wild olive branches.

> And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert graffed in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be graffed in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be graffed in: for God is able to graff them in again. For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is

> wild by nature, and wert graffed contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be graffed into their own olive tree? (Rom. 11:17–24)

God's goal here is two-fold: extending salvation to gentiles and extending unprecedented blessings to the church after the Jews as a corporate people are brought to saving faith. Paul uses a "how much more" argument. He is saying, "If redeemed gentiles have been blessed by God's cutting off of the Jews corporately, how much more will gentile Christians be blessed when the Jews are someday granted saving faith corporately by God's sovereign grace?" Paul says that it is unnatural that wild olive branches should be grafted into holes made by cutting off the natural branches. How much more natural than this grafting in of gentiles would be the re-grafting in of Jews? Far more natural. So, Paul says, gentile Christians should expect this re-grafting in to take place. Someday, Jews as a people will gain access to membership in God's kingdom once again. This will be unlike the situation in Paul's day, when a few Jews were entering into God's kingdom through membership in the church, but most were not.

The argument is *not* this: "Jews were cut off corporately for the sake of the gentile church, and in the future, individual Jews will be brought into the church, leading to great blessings." The reason why this is not Paul's argument is the fact that individual Jews were being brought into the church continually in his day. Paul knew this; he was one of them. There is a great change coming, Paul says: a drastic contrast from his day, which will produce unprecedented blessings for the church. What will this change be? The corporate conversion of the Jews, after the era of the gentiles' near-exclusivity in the church is complete, i.e., after the fulness of the gentiles. The conversion of the Jews as a people will mark the end of the gentile era of the church, when "the fulness of the Gentiles be come in" (v. 25).

Paul's point is, first, that God in his day was dealing corporately with the Jews: blinding their eyes. Second, that God will deal with them differently, but equally corporately, in the future. Someday, they will not be deliberately blinded by God for the sake of redeeming the gentiles. Jews will be given eyes to see. This will be beneficial for both them and the gentiles in the church. Conclusion: *God retains in His prophetic plan a positive role for the Jews as a people*. There remains one unfulfilled prophecy that must be fulfilled after the era of the gentiles has ended, but before the final judgment. Paul continues:

> For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert graffed contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be graffed into their own olive tree? For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes (Rom. 11:24–28).

As with Job, who lost his wealth in order that he might learn some theology and then become even wealthier, so with the Jews. Individual Jews today are excluded from God's kingdom, except by abandoning their own people covenantally. In the future, they will join the church in such large numbers that there will be hardly any Jews remaining behind in their status today: members of a broken national covenant. They will come into the church *en masse*. John Murray wrote:

> If we keep in mind the theme of this chapter and the sustained emphasis on the restoration of Israel, there is no other alternative than to conclude that the proposition, "all Israel shall be saved", is to be interpreted in terms of the fulness, the receiving, the ingrafting of Israel as a people, the restoration of Israel from unbelief and repentance. When the preceding verses are related to verse 26, the salvation of Israel must be conceived of on a scale that is commensurate with their trespass, their loss, their casting away, their breaking off, and their hardening, commensurate, of course, in the opposite direction. This is plainly the implication of the contrasts intimated in fulness, receiving, grafting in, and salvation. In a word, it is the salvation of the mass of Israel that the apostle affirms.[8]

It is worth noting briefly at this point that the refrain, which has been taught for decades to students in dispensational theological seminaries, that covenant theologians have no place for corporate Israel in New Testament prophecy, applies accurately to continental Calvinists in the amillennial and Dutch traditions, but it has not applied to Calvinists in the Scottish Presbyterian tradition. The Scottish Presbyterian tradition has been the dominant Reformed ecclesiastical tradition in the United States. William Hendriksen, a Dutch-American amillennialist, refers to this Scottish interpretation of the conversion of the Jews, which he does not accept, as the most popular theory.[9]

8. Murray, *Romans*, II, p. 98.
9. William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of Paul's Epistle to the*

Decade after decade, dispensational seminary professors have steadfastly ignored comments on the conversion of the Jews that appear in commentaries by Charles Hodge, Robert Haldane, and John Murray—comments that refute the accusation that corporate Israel plays no role in the eschatology of covenant theology.

D. Postmillennialism

Romans 11 has long been viewed by Scottish Presbyterians as supporting postmillennialism. In the nineteenth-century commentaries on Romans by Hodge and Haldane, this view is presented clearly. In John Murray's 1965 commentary, the language is more guarded. The comments are less forthright. But Murray did acknowledge that an era of blessing for the church will follow the future conversion of the Jews. Had he wanted to defend an amillennial interpretation of Romans 11, he could have written, "This era of future blessings describes the post-resurrection New Heaven and New Earth." He did not do so. Instead, he wrote: " 'The fulness of the Gentiles' denotes unprecedented blessing for them but does not exclude even greater blessings to follow. It is to this subsequent blessing that the restoration of Israel contributes."[10] Even more forcefully, he wrote:

> The 'fulness' of Israel, with the implications stated above, is presupposed and from it is drawn the conclusion that the fulness of Israel will involve for the Gentiles a much greater enjoyment of the gospel blessing than that occasioned by Israel's unbelief. Thus there awaits the Gentiles, in their distinctive identity as such, gospel blessing far surpassing anything experienced during the period of Israel's apostasy, and this unprecedented enrichment will be occasioned by the conversion of Israel on a scale commensurate with that of their earlier disobedience. We are not informed at this point what this unprecedented blessing will be. But in view of the thought governing the context, namely, the conversion of the Gentiles and then that of Israel, we should expect that the enlarged blessing would be the expansion of the success attending the gospel and of the kingdom of God.[11]

Murray kept returning to this theme in his commentary on Romans. "This restoration of Israel will have a marked beneficial effect, described as 'life from the dead'. Whatever this result may be it must denote a blessing far surpassing in its proportions anything that pre-

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Romans (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1982), p. 379.

10. Murray, *Romans*, II, pp. 95–96.

11. *Ibid*., II. p. 79.

viously obtained in the unfolding of God's counsel. In this respect it will correspond to the effect accruing from the fulness of Israel (vs. 12)."[12] Murray presented a postmillennial interpretation of Romans 11 in the tradition of Scottish Presbyterianism and Answer 191 of the Westminster Larger Catechism, where Christians are told to pray for the conversion of the Jews.[13]

God's New Covenant kingdom operates in history. It was present even before Christ's crucifixion. Jesus said, "But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you" (Matt. 12:28). He repeatedly cast out devils. Then what about a future millennial era? How will it be different from today? Unlike today, large numbers of people will give Jesus Christ full credit for historical progress. There will be enormous progress in every realm of life, as there has been in our day, but most people will no longer attribute this progress to anything but Jesus Christ, who works through His redeemed people to extend His kingdom in history.

The question is: When will this awareness become widespread? The obvious answer is this: after the conversion of the Jews. This may not be the correct answer, but given Paul's arguments in Romans 11, it is the obvious one. Those who reject this answer ought to suggest and then defend exegetically a better one. And it ought to be consistent with the rest of biblical prophecy, especially Isaiah 65:17–20, which prophesies an era of rejoicing by God's covenant people and the advent of long lives for all mankind (pro-postmillennial), and the parable in Matthew 13 of the tares and the wheat, which says specifically that no separation between them in history (the field) will take place until the day of final judgment (anti-rapture).

1. Economic Blessings

Will the blessings of the post-conversion world be limited to spiritual matters? Or will these blessings include economics? Paul does not say in this passage. What he says is that the blessings will be unprecedented: "how much more." God's casting away of the Jews has brought the gospel to the entire world. Paul wrote to the church at

12. *Ibid.*, II, pp. 81–82.

13. His postmillennialism was not acknowledged by most of his students at Westminster Seminary. This was because his lectures on systematic theology did not take a postmillennial position. In the spring of 1964, I audited his class in senior systematics, on eschatology, and his class on Romans 9–16. I noticed that he was presenting a postmillennial position in the latter class and an apparently amillennial position in the former. He did not take a preterist position on Matthew 24:1–34.

Colossae: "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight: If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and **which was preached to every creature which is under heaven**; whereof I Paul am made a minister" (Col. 1:21–23). His words are clear: "preached to every creature which is under heaven." These words were not meant to be taken literally. The gospel had not literally been preached to every worm, mosquito, and tiger on earth. Then what did Paul mean? He meant that the gospel had been carried across the earth. It had spread fast. Representative people in the tribes of man had heard it. The kingdom of God was no longer bottled up in Palestine.

The Jews were steadily losing the kingdom of God, which was being transferred to the church. The final transfer came in A.D. 70.[14] Did this kingdom involve economic blessings? Of course. The positive sanctions attached to corporate obedience were in part economic.

> Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store (Deut. 28:4–5).[15]

> The LORD shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto; and he shall bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. The LORD shall establish thee an holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, and walk in his ways. And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the LORD; and they shall be afraid of thee. And the LORD shall make thee plenteous in goods, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers to give thee. The LORD shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow. And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the LORD thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them (Deut. 28:8–13).[16]

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14. David Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1987).

15. Gary North, *Inheritance and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Deuteronomy*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1999] 2012), ch. 69.

16. *Idem*.

Why should covenant-keeping gentiles expect anything less than this? Why would the transfer of the institutional kingdom of God from national Israel to the church strip away the desirable economic benefits that had been offered to the nation of Israel? Why should these universally acknowledged economic benefits not be part of God's inheritance to His church, the heir of His earthly kingdom? There are no good biblical reasons.

God had told the Israelites that corporate obedience to His specially revealed law would bring them corporate economic blessings. Paul says here that the Jews someday will corporately come to Christ and thereby re-enter the kingdom through membership in the church. Why should this corporate act of covenant-keeping not re-establish their access to the original covenantal promises given to them through Moses? Why should their temporary removal from membership in the visible kingdom during the era of the gentiles forever remove from them the blessings that had been available to them under the Mosaic Covenant? Paul is prophesying that their conversion will produce unprecedented blessings. If these blessings do not include the realm of economics, then these blessings will not only not be unprecedented, they will be inferior. The Mosaic Covenant will then be shown to the world as having provided greater blessings to ancient Israel than the New Covenant provides to covenant-keepers, even during its most glorious time in history as a result of its combined gentile-Jewish membership. In short, "how much less." This is not what Paul is arguing.

E. Jealous Jews

What will be the great motivation for the Jews to convert corporately to saving faith in the work of Jesus Christ? Paul says it will be their jealousy regarding the gentiles as members of the church. "And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling-block, and a recompence unto them: Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway. I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy" (vv. 9–11). But this jealousy in Paul's day had not produced their conversion. Rather, it had produced their wrath against the church. Paul himself had been an active agent of this wrath.

There must someday be sufficient jealousy that the Jews, as a nation, will conclude, "The kingdom inheritance that was once ours has

been transferred by God to the gentiles. We must affirm our faith in Christ and abandon hope in the restoration of kingdom blessings apart from Christ." This has not happened. Most Jews for almost two millennia believed that their messiah would come and restore dominion to them as a people. This faith began to wane only after Napoleon gave Jews full citizenship after 1800. Jews subsequently divided into three main camps: Orthodox,[17] Reform, and Conservative. Reform Jews have sought worldly success through participation in the economic life of Western capitalism, but they have increasingly been assimilated into the non-Christian gentile world. Jewish birth rates dropped in the second half of the twentieth century. Intermarriage with gentiles in late twentieth-century America steadily decreased the number of young Jews who were raised to observe their ancient traditions.[18] Most of the adult Jews who do still observe a few of the more famous traditions do so mainly for cultural reasons, not religious reasons, which produces a far less powerful commitment. The trappings of religion are not a long-term corporate substitute for a shared faith in a confession that specifies God's dealings with man.

An unprecedented situation has developed since 1948: Jews today live mostly in the United States and the State of Israel. In the United States, Reform Jews are steadily being assimilated into the gentile culture. They constitute the majority of Jews, so Jews are disappearing statistically. In the State of Israel, Jews are vulnerable to a military defeat. It will take only one such comprehensive defeat to threaten their survival as a people. There are very few European Jews in reserve, either in urban ghettos or rural ghettos, as there have always been before. From the days of the Babylonian Empire until the European phase of World War II began on September 1, 1939, they were never threatened as a people by persecution by any one nation or alliance of nations.[19] Now they are. Never before have they deliberately concentrated their numbers geographically. Now they have. Their decision to return to Palestine after World War II has placed half of their eggs in one basket.

17. Originally, "Orthodox" was a term of opprobrium applied by liberal, assimilating Western European Jews to Talmudic Jews in the early nineteenth century. The intellectual leader of the Talmudic Jews in Western Europe, Samson R. Hirsch, decided to accept the term and build on it after 1850.

18. North, *Inheritance and Dominion*, Appendix D.

19. During the war with Rome, there was a large community of Jews in Persia, descendents of those Jews—a large majority—who did not return to Israel under Ezra and Nehemiah.

Intermarriage and humanism's assimilation processes are systematically reducing the number of eggs in the other basket: the United States. Their greatest threat is not persecution; it is acceptance, but on this basis: "Welcome aboard! Don't maintain a separate economy. Take advantage of the division of labor. Here is a scholarship. Go to college." But in college, the rule is clear: "Leave your religious presuppositions behind." Pluralism is Judaism's greatest enemy, the one which Jews have not successfully resisted as a people.

The same temptation faces Christians. Jews and Christians alike have been seduced by pluralism. The lure of higher education and participation in the general economy and culture has offered Christians and Jews a Faustian bargain—not directly with the devil but indirectly: with the humanist kingdom of man. Jews are still not strongly tempted to become Christians, but they are strongly tempted to abandon Judaism. They are not yet jealous of Christians. They are jealous of humanists. The humanists have lured them out of Judaism by promoting a lie: "A religious person can be equally pious even after he has abandoned his religion's supernatural assumptions about God, man, law, causation, and the future. Supernatural religion, when stripped of its kingdom in history, is still equally valid." This has been an enormously successful lie.

Millions of Christians in the United States have resisted this lie by turning their backs on the benefits of participation in the general culture. Those denominations and congregational associations that have experienced the fastest growth through evangelism are least likely to have members who plan to attend the best universities or attend graduate school. Those denominations whose members are more likely to attend the best schools have been growing more slowly or actually shrinking since 1926, the year after the Scopes trial.[20] The cultural choice that took place in 1925—Darwin vs. the Bible—led to a self-conscious rejection by most American fundamentalists of any desire to exercise leadership in the general culture. The humanists' offer of participation on humanism's terms was less effective among fundamentalists, who concentrated on expanding their numbers. The fundamentalists made people this offer: "Come out from among them!" Millions of Americans did so, 1926–1976.[21] Whenever Ameri-

20. Joel A. Carpenter, "Fundamentalist Institutions and the Rise of Evangelical Protestantism, 1929–1942," *Church History*, 49 (1980).

21. In 1976, the Presidential candidacy of Southern Baptist Jimmy Carter lured fundamentalists back into the political arena as self-conscious Christians. When Carter turned out to be no different from other humanistic political liberals, Ronald Reagan's

can fundamentalists have sought political influence, they have done so far more self-consciously as members of a non-loyal opposition. The post-1975 political/ethical issue that made this non-loyal positioning ethically mandatory in the eyes of millions of Christians was the Supreme Court's legalization of abortion in 1973. There is no middle ground of compromise between a dead baby and a live one. It was the abortion issue, more than any other, that persuaded a minority of fundamentalists to adopt the slogan, "there is no neutrality." They do not really believe this, as their continuing opposition to biblical law indicates, but at least they now say it.

Jews today are not jealous of Christians. They are jealous of gentiles. Pluralism offers them the legal right to compete in the quest for the things of this world. They compete very well. Their problem is, they surrender their covenantal identities when they surrender their supernaturalism. As soon as they see success as the fruit of aggressive competition rather than the fruit of adherence to Talmudic tradition, they have abandoned the covenant of Judaism. They have done this by the millions, and they have justified this decision by telling themselves that to be a good Jew does not require personal faith in the authority of the Torah, the prophets, the Talmud, and rabbinical law. Yet these are what served as the core of Judaism after A.D. 70. What kept Jews together as a separate people were its claims regarding God's supernatural dealings with the Jews as a people, which involved, above all, a messianic future. Remove Jews' faith in a literal messiah, and Judaism becomes a cultural religion. Insert Zionism, and Judaism becomes a political religion. Political religions do not last for millennia. Neither do nations that rest on political religion.

Paul says that Jews will survive as a self-consciously separate people until the fulness of the gentiles arrives. This means that today's political-cultural Judaism cannot dominate Judaism indefinitely. Birth rates and intermarriage rates indicate that liberal Judaism has no future. Unless liberal Judaism does what liberal Protestantism has failed to do—recover its lost growth—Orthodox Judaism will replace liberal Judaism until the fulness of the gentiles.

1980 candidacy attracted large numbers of fundamentalists. After Reagan decisively defeated Carter, he retained the support of fundamentalists during his eight years as President. In private conversations with fundamentalist pastors, Reagan indicated that he believed in Christ as his savior, but he was never open about this. Prior to his 1966 election as Governor of California, he had attended Bel Air Presbyterian Church in the West Los Angeles area, whose pastor, Donn Moomah, was an evangelical.

Conclusion

Romans 11 is an important eschatological passage. It tells us that an event must intervene before Jesus brings the final judgment. This event is the conversion of the Jews. God will someday redeem the Jews as a people, meaning that a large percentage of them will, in a brief period of time, abandon Judaism and convert to Christianity, which will vastly increase God's blessings on His church. Future positive sanctions on God's church are tied prophetically to God's special grace shown to the Jews as a people. This conversion will be an act of corporate inheritance analogous to God's act of corporate disinheri-tance, which was taking place in Paul's day. But there would be a difference. If the cutting off of the Jews corporately has brought the blessing of redemption to gentiles corporately through membership in the institutional church, how much more should gentile Christians expect when the Jews are at last brought back into the kingdom corporately through membership in the church!

8

THE WHOLE OF OUR LIVES

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

ROMANS 12:1–2

The theocentric focus in this passage is God as the owner of every man. He places a legal claim on the whole of our lives. This is point one of the biblical covenant: sovereignty.[1]

A. The Meaning of Sacrifice

Paul, in Romans 11, presented the case for the future conversion of the Jews to saving faith as a separate people. Here he switches to the theme of total sacrifice. He is writing to Romans. For Romans, total sacrifice meant human sacrifice. This is what it meant for the Greeks, too. Both societies had originally practiced human sacrifice.[2] Rome in Paul's day still imposed the death penalty on any vestal virgin who allowed the city's sacred fire to go out. She was buried alive.[3] Paul was not advocating this form of living sacrifice. He did not want redeemed people to die; he wanted them to live.

1. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1987] 1992), ch. 1 Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory*, 5th ed. (Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision, [1980] 2010), ch. 1.

2. Lord Acton, "Human Sacrifice" (1863), in *Essays in Religion, Politics, and Morality*, 3 vols. (Indianapolis, Indiana: LibertyClassics, 1988), III, ch. 19.

3. Fustel de Coulanges, *The Ancient City: A Study on the Religion, Laws, and Institutions of Greece and Rome* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor, [1864] 1955), III:VI, p. 147.

For Jews, the image of a total sacrifice hearkened back to the whole burnt offering (Lev. 1). But this could not be a living sacrifice. A sacrificial animal had to be slain before it was placed on the altar. The exception, theologically speaking, was Jesus Christ. He was placed on the altar alive: a perfect sacrifice, unlike bulls, lambs, turtledoves, and goats.

> So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation. For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins (Heb. 9:28–10:4).

> Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (Heb. 10:8–10).

We do not sacrifice ourselves on our own behalf in order to gain right legal standing with God. Jesus Christ has done this for us. Yet Paul speaks here of presenting our bodies to God as living sacrifices. We call upon God to consume us, just as He consumed the Old Covenant sacrifices. We become in effect drink offerings before God (Num. 15:5, 7, 10). We are poured out before Him. This requires our complete break with this world: "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (v. 2). We must surrender the whole of our lives. This involves both body and mind, appearance and confession.

God possesses a legal claim on all men. This claim is made visible in the rite of baptism. The Christian acknowledges publicly that God possesses this legal claim, or else his parents acknowledged this publicly on his behalf through infant baptism. Earlier in this epistle, Paul described one implication of baptism: death to sin. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory

of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Rom. 6:3–6). Here he describes a positive implication: service to God. Our lives are no longer our own. They belong to Christ.

Christ's followers are supposed to regard their lives as utterly forfeited. They must place themselves completely at Christ's disposal. This donation to God is their reasonable service. Paul makes it plain that everything we possess of any value rightfully belongs to God. We are to offer this to God, holding nothing back.

The highest military honor in the United States is the Congressional Medal of Honor. It is awarded, generally posthumously, to men who have performed "above and beyond the call of duty." This phrase can never apply to Christian service. The Christian's call of duty is total. He cannot go beyond it. He must not think of himself as superior to others when he performs well. He has only met his call of duty. "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith" (v. 3). A sober assessment of one's performance, given the presupposition of the requirement of total sacrifice, leads to a sober conclusion. The individual has performed well, but this was only what was expected.

B. God's Monopoly of Service

God possesses a legal monopoly: complete ownership of each person. He is the sole owner as well as the soul's owner. He does not share this legal claim with anyone. But there are false contenders.

The Communist Party at one time commanded a degree of loyalty comparable to God's. Benjamin Gitlow was one of the founders of the Communist Party of America in the early 1920s. He was expelled by Stalin in 1929. In 1924 and 1928, he was the Communist Party's candidate for Vice President of the United States. He defected from the Party in the late 1930s. He testified against the Party in front of a Congressional investigating committee. He chose as the title of his study of American Communism, *The Whole of Their Lives* (1948). He understood what the Party had demanded from him and all other members: complete sacrifice. This aspect of Party rule was discussed

by other defectors. Douglas Hyde, a high official in the Communist Party of England in the 1940s, made the same point in his memoir, *Dedication and Leadership* (1966). Hyde joined the Roman Catholic Church at the time of his defection from the Party.

No human institution may lawfully place such a claim on any man's life. Organizations may officially do this, but they cannot sustain such loyalty, generation after generation. I wrote to Hyde in the 1980s, hoping to get the right to reprint a series of lectures he had presented to church workers. He had taken certain Communist Party training techniques and had reworked them for application in service within the church. He refused to allow me to reprint the lectures. He told me that they had been delivered in an era in which such dedication by Party members was common. By the mid-1980s, this degree of dedication had disappeared. He did not want the public to imagine that the Communist Party still represented the threat that it had. He was correct about the threat. By 1989, faith in Communism had visibly departed inside the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. In 1991, the Soviet Union collapsed.

For any human institution to claim such dedication from its followers is to make a false claim of divinity. It requires the divinization of some aspect of the creation. God will not tolerate such claims. He is a jealous God.

C. Dedication and Profitability

God requires total dedication. This dedication is always mediated institutionally. It is not just that people are required to pray to God. They are also required to obey Him. This means that they must serve Him in history and through history. They serve Him by serving in the church, family, and state. They serve Him in their occupations. They serve Him enthusiastically. Paul writes: "Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ" (Col. 3:22–24).

The goal here is dedicated, enthusiastic service to those people in lawful authority. Men serve those in authority above them. In the free market, this means that producers ultimately serve customers. It is the customer who possesses final authority in the free market, for he possesses the most marketable commodity: money. Money is the

free market's means of bringing sanctions. Customers decide to buy or not to buy. This imposes positive sanctions on some sellers, and negative sanctions on others.

In the next section of chapter 12, Paul describes the division of labor in the church. The church is described as a living organism with specialized organs: members. Each organ has a function that supports the rest of the body.[4] The goal is service to God. In the early verses, Paul establishes the individual basis of the church's corporate life: personal sacrifice. When people adopt this attitude of service, the church prospers.

This is true of any institution whose members adopt this view of service. No institution may lawfully claim total service, but it can become the beneficiary of workers who have as their personal ideal their complete dedication to God. *Christians who adopt this outlook and who then discipline themselves to achieve it become highly valuable members of whatever organization employs them*. The attitude of complete dedication to God produces employees who are profitable. They put more wealth into the employing organization than their competitors do. They in effect buy attention from their employers.

There should be a premium on hiring covenant-keepers. *Organizations should recognize that covenant-keepers perform better than their rivals at any given wage*. This should make them more desirable employees. They should be near the top of the list of those who are "first hired, last fired." If this is not the case, then there is an abnormality. Perhaps they are not being faithful to Paul's injunction. Or perhaps employers do not yet recognize their superior performance. But, over time, faithful service gains attention. It is always rare. It calls attention to itself. The supreme Old Testament example is Joseph, who faithfully served Potiphar, the jailer, and the Pharaoh's cup-bearer. Another is Ruth, the gleaner.

Dedicated service increases social cooperation. It reduces the risk of failure. *A society filled with people who possess this ideal of service will gain greater wealth, including greater wealth per capita, than a society that lacks it*. The earth will be subdued by people who possess this outlook on service. The dominion covenant is fulfilled in such a way that those who obey God on this point become the heirs of the world. "What man is he that feareth the LORD? him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose. His soul shall dwell at ease; and his seed shall inherit the earth" (Ps. 25:12–13).

4. Chapter 9.

Conclusion

Paul announced God's comprehensive claim on His people. God's redeemed people are supposed to serve God without reservation. They are to hold back nothing. They do, of course, just as Ananias and Sapphira did (Acts 5).[5] But Jesus Christ did not hold anything back. His perfect sacrifice, in life and death, becomes the possession of all those who are redeemed by grace through faith. Christ's perfect righteousness is imputed—transferred judicially—by God the Father to Christ's followers.[6]

The goal of perfect service is inescapable. We are to become living sacrifices. As God's people approach this ideal, however imperfectly, they serve God by serving other men. They serve in institutions and in institutional settings. They begin to gain a reputation for humble, efficient service to humanity. This advances the kingdom of God in history.

They become more valuable employees because they do serve their employers faithfully. This is how they serve God. This makes covenant-keepers more desirable employees.

5. Gary North, *Sacrifice and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Acts*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 4.

6. Chapter 4.

9

THE CHURCH AS AN INTERDEPENDENT BODY

For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.

ROMANS 12:4–8

The theocentric focus of this passage is Christ. Christ is head of His church: hierarchy. This is point two of the biblical covenant.[1] Elsewhere, Paul writes of Christ: "And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence" (Col. 1:17–18). The church is Christ's body.

A. The Metaphor of Members

Membership today means "belongs to." People are members of clubs, associations, teams, and churches. The original meaning of "member" is closer to Paul's metaphor: an appendage of a body. This usage is not common today. Because of this, the metaphor has lost much of its power. It is still a useful metaphor. Paul describes the church as a living organism, a body. He does not say it is *like* a living organism. He does not offer an analogy. He says that we *are* members of a living

1. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1987] 1992), ch. 1. Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory*, 5th ed. (Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision, 2010), ch. 1.

organism. The church's members participate in a society called the church, but Paul describes it as a body. Members in a *judicial* sense he describes as members in a *biological* sense. Paul does not describe church members as cogs in a great machine. He describes them as appendages—members—of a body.

Sociologist Robert Nisbet observed that "The organism serves not only as a model of growth for contemplating the world, but also as a model of structure, of the articulation of separate entities, such as the heart and lungs. To emphasize the harmonious interaction of parts in an organization, it is customary to use 'organic' as highest praise."[2] Metaphors of organic change are more commonly used than metaphors of mechanical change. This may be because mechanical change is cyclical. A machine does not grow. It performs a limited task over and over. A machine has no sensations. A person does not normally look at a broken machine and then make a comparison with himself. He does not see a broken machine rusting in a junk yard, and think to himself, "How terrifying!" A machine has a maker, an owner, or a user, but it has no head. A body has a head. A body develops through time. This is why the organic analogy is far more powerful than mechanism for describing social processes or organizations.

As surely as a body dies without a head, so does an institution die without leadership. It may merely flounder at first. The phrase, "running around like a chicken with its head cut off," is used to describe an organization that has no leadership. It runs around aimlessly before it dies. But, of course, organizations do not literally run around. They have no feet. Either they stay in operation or they close. The proper question is: Does an organization operate in terms of a shared vision? A leader must articulate this vision and impose sanctions in terms of it. For a hierarchy to function, there must be a representative agent who speaks with authority, and who the makes decisions to delegate part of this authority. There must be a hierarchy in order to gain the advantages of the division of labor.[3] Institutional cooperation is structured by a hierarchy with a representative figure who possesses the authority to impose sanctions.

Paul describes Christ as the head of the church. This head cannot die, nor can the body, which extends into eternity (Rev. 21; 22). But this body can lose appendages. A body that is missing an appendage

2. Robert Nisbet, *Prejudices: A Philosophical Dictionary* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 219.

3. Chapter 1.

does not function as well as a body with all of its appendages. If an appendage does not work properly, the body suffers. Paul calls on members of the church at Rome to do their work well. This will benefit the church even as a body benefits from healthy appendages. Paul expects his readers to understand what he is getting at: strife is bad for a church. He calls them to righteous behavior. "Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality" (Rom. 12:9–13).

There are conceptual weaknesses with organic metaphors that describe institutions. Unless organic metaphors are carefully qualified, they are not perceived as judicial; they become merely functional. *The covenantal issues of life are judicial*. It is not simply that an institution has a leader. The leader serves *representatively*: in between the organization and the individuals who lawfully own it.

Paul could have limited his language to strictly judicial categories. He could also have invoked the image of a family. He did neither. What is it about a body that is so powerful an image? I suggest that the economic principle of the *division of labor* is best understood in terms of an *organic metaphor*. We can easily understand the operation of a social organization when it is described as a body. A body that experiences conflict among its members may become helpless. A person whose body suffers epileptic seizures is unreliable. A person who suffers from spastic discoordination is limited in what he can do. People see such afflictions in others and shudder. "What if I were so afflicted?" It frightens them. The affliction is of a specific kind: discoordination.

Paul takes this common fear and makes use of it. How terrible when a church suffers from conflicts. This discoordination threatens to paralyze the church. He is making a comparison: if you fear becoming physically afflicted in such a way, you should fear that the church of Christ should become similarly afflicted. Paul wants Christians to regard strife in the church as they would regard epileptic seizures. Christians should not take lightly such disruptions inside the church.

B. Joint Productivity, Joint Service

Paul says that we possess different gifts, "gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us." This diversity of gifts is a benefit to the church. The church has within its membership people with many kinds of abilities. They can offer their gifts to the church in faithful service. The church is then in a position to offer to its members and to the world a wide range of assistance. The church becomes a clearing house for a diversity of services. The larger the church grows, the greater its range of services.

The same principle of organization operates in the world outside the institutional church. An increasing division of labor is a major benefit to a society. Men have been given many different skills and insights. A social order that encourages people to offer their services for sale to others is able to increase the wealth of its participants, meaning an increasing range of choices. Adam Smith, in Chapter 1 of *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), relied on the principle of the division of labor to explain how people can increase their personal wealth through voluntary exchange and production for a market.

The institutional church is not a profit-seeking entity. It is funded by the tithes and donations of its members, not by profit. It offers healing of all kinds to its members, beginning with physical healing. "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord" (James 5:14). Service begins with love. "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34–35). "Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits" (Rom. 12:16). As the church grows, more people are brought into the community of saints. Some of them have needs that they cannot satisfy outside the covenant community. Others possess abilities that can meet the needs of others. The church enables those with needs to gain the help required to restore them. As they become restored to health in the widest sense, they can become sources of aid to those who are not yet healthy.

Covenant-keepers serve Christ by serving each other. This is true inside the institutional church and outside. Then what is unique or different about the institutional church? Answer: it alone offers the sacraments. God's *special judicial presence* in the sacramental rites is

unique. Participation in sacramental rites brings God's people under God's judgment. Sanctions are dispensed to church members by God as a direct result of their participation in the sacraments. These sanctions can be positive[4] or negative.[5] A sense of community is one result of participation in the sacraments. Church members participate in a community that has been called by God to leave a world that is ultimately perishing, yet they must return to this perishing world when the worship service ends. Their worship inside is designed to make them better citizens outside. "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Rom. 12:18). Formal worship strengthens them in their status as residents of two worlds: eternity and time. Jesus prayed publicly to His Father: "I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world" (John 17:14–18).

Paul in this passage calls his readers to faithful service inside the institutional church. His goal is to persuade his readers to present their bodies as a living sacrifice to Christ. The starting point for their sacrificial service is the institutional church. The proper motivational impulse is charity, not earthly profit.

The division of labor aids church members in their ability to serve each other. Each member knows that there are other members who possess skills that may benefit him sometime. He can put his mind at greater rest because the church includes people who are willing to serve each other. The church in this respect seems more like a family than a body, yet Paul describes the church in terms of a body. It is almost if he is reluctant to encourage his readers to associate the church with the family. A family is the more obvious mental association, yet Paul uses a metaphor instead: body. Otherwise, many people would be tempted to proclaim the structure of a family to serve as a model for the church. The church is not a family.[6] It has sacraments. A family does not. The

4. "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16).

5. "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep" (I Cor. 11:30).

6. Gary North, *Baptized Patriarchalism: The Cult of the Family* (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1995).

church extends into heaven. Men there have access to the ultimate sacrament, the tree of life. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Rev. 22:14). A family does not continue in heaven. "For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven" (Matt. 22:30).

A church member knows that whatever he lacks, others in the church may possess. The larger the church or association of churches, the more likely that there will be providers of every kind of service. A member does not have to master every area of service, which is beyond his abilities. He need only concentrate on the limited range of services that he performs best. The same message appears in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 12.

C. The Institutional Church

Paul is not speaking here of the church in the sense of believers in general, i.e., the invisible church. He is speaking of the body of Christ as an identifiable organization that uniquely represents Christ in history and eternity. Paul's audience was a group of Christians who were assembled together to hear the reading of his letter. This organization had members. (Our term for a group reflects Paul's metaphor: **orga-n**ization.) It had a structure: hierarchy. This hierarchy had sanctions. The focus of his concern in this section is the smooth functioning of an institution. The same is true of I Corinthians 6 on church courts.

The body of Christ represents Christ visibly in a way that the family and the civil government do not. This is why the church extends into eternity. The family and civil government do not. *This means that the central institution in God's kingdom is the institutional church*. Sociological analysis often begins with the family. The idea of the centrality of the family is not a biblical principle. It is far more pagan than Christian. It places biological relationships above sacramental relationships. It places loyalty to death-bound people above loyalty to the resurrected Christ, who is represented in history by His body. Jesus severely condemned the idea of family loyalty's being superior to loyalty to Him. "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter

more than me is not worthy of me" (Matt. 10:34–37). The idea of the centrality of the state is pagan. This was the great heresy of Classical civilization. This ideal, too, is in conflict with the biblical principle of the centrality of the church. It is the church alone that lawfully offers the dual covenantal oath-signs of baptism and the Lord's Supper, which are eternal sanctions, not just temporal.

The state can represent Christ judicially. So can the family. But both institutions can also represent other worldviews, other gods. The church is uniquely Christ's. The sacraments are *judicial oath signs* that point uniquely to *God's final judgment*. The sanctions that are imposed by family and state do not uniquely point to God's final judgment. Excommunication—separation from the sacraments—judicially represents hell. Paul never uses the following language with respect to family or state. "For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (I Cor. 5:3–5).

Family and state sanctions do not covenantally deliver a man's body to Satan, nor do they involve a man's spirit. Family and state are common-grace institutions. Their covenantal blessings are available to all people irrespective of people's personal confessions. The church is a special-grace institution that is lawfully open only to those who confess Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (I Cor. 2:2). The church is uniquely Christ's body.

Conclusion

The church is the body of Christ. It has many members, Paul says here. It possesses unity. "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." It also possesses diversity: "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us." Each member is to serve God by serving others. This fulfills Paul's initial command: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1).

The division of labor strengthens the church. It creates a broad range of talents and services. Individuality is affirmed by this broad

range of talents, yet institutional unity is also established: a more self-sufficient entity.

Paul places no restrictions on either this diversity or this unity. He does not suggest that members should not cooperate with each other. The range of services is limited only by the size of the church. There is no indication that the church is to be broken into non-cooperating subdivisions. On the contrary, the church is Christ's body. It cannot be broken up into noncooperating subdivisions without injuring it. The range of the division of labor is limited only by the size of the church. The church is international. The division of labor within the church is international. In the midst of international violence, there should be a beacon of peace. In the midst of noncooperation among peoples and nations, there should be an example of cooperation. The church is designed by God to be the premier example. When it is not the premier example, then either it is at fault or the observers are.

10

COALS OF FIRE

Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

ROMANS 12:17–21

The theocentric basis of this passage is God as the final judge: point four of the biblical covenant.[1]

A. The Goal of Peace

A continuing theme in Paul's epistles is the goal of peace. He wrote to Timothy: "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (I Tim. 2:1–2).[2] The quest for peace is important in the spread of the gospel. Peace allows Christians to bring the message of salvation to people in a non-threatening way. Peace is good for the gospel in the same way that peace is good for trade. It reduces costs.

The more that people must spend to defend their property, the less money remains to improve services and products. The same is true

1. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1987] 1992), ch. 4. Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory*, 5th ed. (Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision, 2010), ch. 4.

2. Gary North, *Hierarchy and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on First Timothy*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2001] 2012), ch. 2.

of building the church. The more that Christians must spend in defending themselves in courts, the less they have for helping the poor, sending missionaries, and building schools.

Of course, there is no guarantee that the savings which peace provides will not be used to fund personal luxury. The wealth that peace provides can also be used to confirm men in their assertion of autonomy. This is what Moses warned against. "And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day" (Deut. 8:17–18).[3] So, peace is a factor of production, one that is paid for by peaceable behavior and prayer. These are the currency of peace, not gold or silver. Gold and silver purchase protection when peace is in short supply.

B. Rendering Good for Evil

Jesus offered a similar plan of action.

> Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you (Matt. 5:39–44).

When facing tyrants, Jesus said, go out of your way to cooperate with them. Call attention to yourself as a person who does not cause trouble. We can call this strategy "bribing tyrants."[4] When facing evil men, do not challenge them directly. Do not give them an opportunity to get even with you. They are evil. They have bad motives. They delight in revenge. Recognize this in advance, Jesus implied. When facing a hammer, do not look like a nail.

Paul writes: "Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire

3. Gary North, *Inheritance and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Deuteronomy*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1999] 2012), chaps. 21, 22.

4. Gary North, *Priorities and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Matthew*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 9.

on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (vv. 20–21). This is a direct citation from Proverbs: "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee" (Prov. 25:21–22). Paul here makes the connection between Jesus' instruction in the Sermon on the Mount and Solomon's instruction a millennium earlier. Paul clarifies the strategy by calling attention to the negative sanction: coals of fire. The strategy has a positive aspect, which Jesus referred to: love your enemies. But it also has a negative aspect, which Solomon referred to: heap coals of fire on their heads.

How can the positive sanctions and the negative sanctions be reconciled? By the doctrine of final judgment.

C. Final Judgment

The Old Covenant had almost nothing to say about life after death. Daniel refers briefly to the final judgment.

> And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever (Dan 12:1–3).

This is the clearest statement of final judgment in the Old Covenant. Job's statement is less clear: "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God" (Job 19:25–26). There are no other statements. There was Samuel's appearance to Saul and the "witch" of Endor (I Sam. 28:15).

Solomon's statement did not refer to final judgment. In the New Testament, Jesus' doctrine of hell makes clear what was implied by Daniel's statement, "shame and everlasting contempt." Jesus warned: "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28). The description of hell in Luke 16 is graphic.[5] Even more explicit is John's statement regarding final judgment:

5. Gary North, *Treasure and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Luke*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 40.

"And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:14–15).

There is no doubt that Paul's reference to coals of fire refers to the final judgment. But how can being good to an evil-doer increase the number of coals on his head, i.e., increase his eternal misery? Because of Jesus' teaching about information and responsibility.

> And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more (Luke 12:47–48).[6]

The principle is this: *greater knowledge creates greater responsibility*. Therefore, when an unregenerate person receives blessings from God, including blessings from God's designated covenantal agents (covenant-keepers), his responsibility increases. If he remains unregenerate until his death, these undeserved blessings—grace—testify against him. All of the blessings in history become curses in eternity.

D. Means of Special Grace

There is the positive side of righteous dealing. The covenant-breaker can see that a covenant-keeper is not reacting as expected. He is not returning evil for evil. This sets the covenant-keeper visibly apart from other people. Jesus discussed this in the context of His command to return good for evil. "For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:46–48).[7] If you are no better than a publican—a tax collector—then you are not much good at all, Jesus said.

The evil person is not morally blind. He has the work of the law written in his heart, Paul insists (Rom. 2:14–15).[8] He can see the difference in attitude between the typical sinner and the untypical covenant-keeper. The policy of returning good for evil eventually eats at the evil man's conscience. He may try to provoke an evil response by further evil, but then his evil-doing is more of a challenge to the

6. *Ibid.*, ch. 28.
7. North, *Priorities and Dominion*, ch. 10.
8. Chapter 3.

covenant-keeper's ability to keep the faith than it is a desire to inflict evil for its own sake. It is a test of commitment, a measure of commitment. It takes a abnormally self-conscious evil-doer to persist in this sort of exercise. The typical evil-doer grows weary of such testing. It is more desirable to inflict his will on someone who fights back. This resistance provides him with an opportunity to display his power. To use a modern example, a thug may steal an old woman's purse, but he is unlikely to return to taunt her. Beating up an old woman does not demonstrate his manhood. It may even lead to a challenge to his manhood by a rival thug, who has little respect for someone who beats up old women.

The testimony of non-resistance is powerful. It disorients the evil-doer. He may not understand that this non-resistance comes from a position of emotional strength. In one of the most significant events in the history of the United States, the baseball player, Jackie Robinson, was brought up from the Negro League to the major leagues, which were all-white, by the Brooklyn Dodgers' general manager, Branch Rickey. Rickey had hired him in 1945 and assigned him to the Dodgers' all-white minor league team in Montreal, Canada, where there was much less racial discrimination and very few blacks. (Two decades earlier, Rickey had been the first owner to buy a minor league team to use as a recruiting-training system.) In 1945, no other black athlete was allowed to play in a major professional team sport in the United States. Robinson would test the color barrier in professional team sports.[9] He had been legendary in the Negro League for his temper and for his resistance to racial discrimination by whites whenever he could get away with it without going to jail.[10] As an Army officer, he had been court martialed, though not convicted, in 1944 for his refusal to sit in the back of an Army bus in the South, where the requirement was universal in non-military buses. Rickey promised to bring him up to the Dodgers in 1947, but with one proviso: for three seasons, Robinson could not fight back in any way against racial slurs from fans or players, which might even include Dodgers players. He could not fight back off the playing field, either. Rickey asked him if he would agree to this. Robinson did not answer immediately. He

9. Jules Tygiel, *Baseball's Great Experiment: Jackie Robinson and His Legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

10. When a gasoline station attendant refused to let him use the toilet, he told the team's bus driver to stop filling the tank, which was a big sale: 100 gallons. The attendant then relented. This was the first time anyone in the black league had risked this, or even thought of it: "no toilet facilities—no gasoline sale."

mentally counted the cost. Then he agreed. He kept his part of the bargain. So did his wife as she sat in the stands. By the end of three years, he was so well respected by the other players that he no longer faced the problem. Meanwhile, other teams had hired players out of the Negro League. Robinson was a highly talented player, but talent was not enough. He had to swallow his pride and his anger in order to serve as a wedge for other members of his race.[11]

Paul's requirement was covenantally based. It was tied to eternal sanctions: heaven or hell. It went beyond this division. The coals of fire would accumulate in hell. There are differences in rewards in eternity, he taught (I Cor. 3:13–15).[12] There also differences in punishments in eternity.

E. Social Cooperation

Christians are supposed to treat evil men well. They are to gain the reputation of being reliable servants and colleagues, even to the extent of dealing magnanimously with oppressors. This brings into play the important "how much more" factor. "If these people are reliable when working with oppressors, how much more reliable will they be when working with well-meaning people?" If Christians are low-cost workers, meaning trouble-free workers, in situations commanded by troublemakers, how much more will they cooperate with decent people?

A reputation for being a low-cost worker is an economic asset. When an employer is looking to hire someone, he wants a cooperative employee. Similarly, when he is looking to fire someone, he prefers to keep a cooperative employee. The economic law is this: "When the price falls, more will be demanded." When the cost of working with someone falls, he will receive more job opportunities. He will possess an advantage over competitors who are not equally easy to work with.

Paul's command, like Jesus' before him, is a means of peace and prosperity for those who obey it. The person who follows these guidelines will receive a reward: more opportunities for profitable service. This is not "pie in the sky by and by." This is a system of temporal rewards.

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11. He was not the first member of his family to challenge the racist attitudes of his day. His older brother, a sprinter, won the silver medal behind the great black sprinter Jesse Owens in the 200-meter dash at the 1936 Olympic games in Germany: a challenge to the race-based Nazi movement and a cause of acclaim by American fans.

12. Gary North, *Judgment and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on First Corinthians*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2001] 2012), ch. 3.

What of temporal coals of fire? Think of the tyrant. If a man persecutes evil people, the common man is not concerned. But if he persecutes decent people, he will find that common people grow suspicious of his motives and his character. They will tend to avoid working with him or for him. Who can safely trust someone who persecutes decent people? Every tyrant requires voluntary cooperation. He does not possess sufficient resources to gain cooperation solely by threat of violence. He must gain the support of people who are self-governed. People withhold such support from those whose motives and character they do not trust. They may not resist, but they do not offer cooperation voluntarily. This increases the costs of production.

Conclusion

Paul's command to treat persecutors well is a means of the expansion of God's kingdom in history. It benefits covenant-keepers in history. It also testifies to God's common grace to all men in history, as Jesus said. "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. 5:44–45).[13] It is a means for bringing eternal sanctions against persecutors. It produces results that hamper the expansion of evil in history by bringing tyranny into disrepute. Men withhold cooperation from tyrants.

This is a strategy to gain peace. Peace is an economic asset, a benefit that must be paid for. The cost in this case is self-government: the overcoming of the natural desire to reward evil with evil.

13. North, *Priorities and Dominion*, ch. 10.

11

LEGITIMATE GOVERNMENTS

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

ROMANS 13:1–7

The theocentric principle that undergirds these commandments is God as the supreme authority: hierarchy.[1] At the top of the pyramids of institutional power is God, who delegates authority to men.

A. Plural Authorities

Paul speaks of higher powers. Strong's *Concordance* defined the Greek word *exousia* as follows: "(in the sense of ability); privilege, i.e. (subj.) force, capacity, competency, freedom, or (obj.) mastery (concr. magistrate, superhuman, potentate, token of control), delegated influence: authority, jurisdiction, liberty, power, right, strength." It means, basically, lawful authorities. There are more than one. There is no single

1. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1987] 1992), ch. 2. Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory*, 5th ed. (Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision, [1980] 2010), ch. 2.

hierarchy in this life. God has created competing jurisdictions in order to eliminate the possibility of an absolute centralized tyranny. "And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city" (Gen. 11:6–8).[2] A national civil government or empire has always faced competition: from foreign civil rulers, local civil rulers, families, kinship groups, churches, voluntary associations, and businesses.[3]

Paul says here that lawful authorities deserve obedience. He does not say or imply that there is only one lawful institutional authority that must be obeyed. In his confrontation with the high priest, he made this point clear. Even though he was an apostle and in possession of lawful authority, he did not deliberately challenge the high priest. "And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth. Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law? And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest? Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people" (Acts 23:2–5). Paul honored lawful authorities. But when one authority could be used to offset another, Paul set them in competition to gain his freedom. "But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question. And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided" (Acts 23:6–7). The Sadducee party, which denied the bodily

2. Gary North, *Sovereignty and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Genesis* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1982] 2012), ch. 19.

3. Defenders of the modern state sometimes claim final earthly jurisdiction for it: *the divine right of civil government*—no earthly appeal to anything higher. Such a claim was taken far more seriously in 1940 than at the end of the twentieth century. The high-water mark of the West's faith in civil government is now behind us. The inevitable bankruptcy of all of the Western governments' pay-as-you-go, tax-supported, compulsory retirement programs will eliminate most of the remaining traces of this faith before the mid-twenty-first century. On these statistically doomed programs, see Peter G. Peterson, *Gray Dawn: How the Coming Age Wave Will Transform America—and the World* (Times Books, 1999).

resurrection, was associated with the temple's priesthood. Paul's words to the Pharisees immediately undermined Ananias' power to prosecute Paul on the authority of the priesthood.

No power is established on earth that is not established by God. On this point, Paul is clear. "For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God" (v. 1). This English phrase—"the powers that be"—has come down through the centuries to describe the supreme rulers in a society. Therefore, obedience to them is biblically mandatory. "Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation" (v. 2). Because God has established authorities to rule over men, men are required by God to obey rulers.

Paul lived under the rule of Nero, a tyrant by any standard. Yet he writes: "For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good" (v. 4) Christians are to do good deeds, gaining praise from their rulers. God has set rulers in seats of authority to be a terror to evil-doers. Let these rulers devote their efforts to overcoming their enemies, not look for rebellious Christians to prosecute.

There are rulers who themselves are evil and allied with evil men. Nevertheless, Paul says to obey. The goal of governments is to defend social order. Every government has rules. It enforces standards with sanctions. Most civil rulers want more authority for themselves. They want things to run smoothly. God has built into human nature the desire to live in a predictable world. For predictability, there must be rules and sanctions.[4] This is why rules and sanctions make life easier. Tyrants want predictability. The closer to righteousness the civil laws are, the more voluntary cooperation that rulers will gain from their subordinates. Rulers cannot rule without subordinates who voluntarily cooperate. If everyone refused to obey a law, there would not be enough police to enforce it. This is why rulers prosecute a representative figure. This sends a message to the public: "If you don't obey, and everyone else does, we'll get you." But there comes a day when many people take a chance and deliberately disobey the law. They refuse to cooperate with the civil government. On that day, the illusion of state omnipotence ends.

The early church lived under a pagan civil tyranny. Rome mandated idolatry as a means of extending the power of the empire. This

4. North, *Sovereignty and Dominion*., chaps. 3, 4.

polytheistic system of civil rule sought intercultural unity by divinizing the emperor. But Christians refused to offer public sacrifices to "the genius of the emperor," for they understood the theology of ancient empires: the divinization of man and the state. For this rebellion, they were intermittently persecuted for almost three centuries. They did not rebel by taking up arms. They merely refused to participate in false worship. Over time, they gained the reputation for being good citizens and reliable subordinates. In the fourth century, they inherited the Roman empire. They had served under tyranny, and they became rulers when this tyranny collapsed into the chaos of civil war and bankruptcy. Nonviolent disobedience to civil authority on this one point eventually gained Christians civil authority. Otherwise, they were obedient. This is a biblical principle of authority: he who seeks to rule should first serve. Jesus told His disciples, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve" (Luke 22:25–26).[5] But there is another principle of biblical authority. "Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). Both principles must be honored. Both principles must be intellectually defended by covenant-keepers. Both must be honored by the flock.

B. The Legitimacy of Governments

Paul's discussion of institutional authorities follows a passage that challenges personal vengeance. "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Rom. 12:19). If personal vengeance is wrong, then how does God bring vengeance in history? Through civil government. The text does not say that vengeance is wrong. It says that God possesses final authority to impose vengeance. He has delegated the authority to impose physical vengeance to two governments: civil and family. Peter agreed with Paul on this point. "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing

5. Gary North, *Treasure and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Luke*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 51.

ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king. Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully" (I Peter 2:13–19).

Neither Peter nor Paul demanded obedience to civil government at the expense of obedience to other lawful governments. Again, Peter explicitly told the Jewish leaders, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29b). Yet they had the authority to beat him, which they did (Acts 5:40). He submitted to the beating, but not to their command to stop preaching the gospel. He disobeyed, but he submitted to the sanctions for the sake of his disobedience. So did Paul.

The point is this: Peter and Paul self-consciously operated within the existing Roman legal system. Paul understood Roman law, and as a Roman citizen, he invoked it. "But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me? Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest. For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar" (Acts 25:9–11). His words, "I refuse not to die," affirmed the legitimacy of civil government, including capital punishment. But, at the same time, he appealed to Caesar to escape the jurisdiction of Festus, who Paul believed was acting on behalf of the Jews. This was consistent with his affirmation of the ministerial office of civil magistrates.

The anarcho-capitalist rejects all forms of civil government. He can point to every kind of tax as distorting the free market.[6] He sees the free market as legitimately autonomous. But then come the problems of violence and sin. How can these be predictably restrained? The biblical answer is government, including civil government. In an anarcho-capitalist world of profit-seeking private armies, the result is the warlord society. Militarily successful private armies will always seek to establish their monopolistic rule by killing the competition, literally. Civil governments always reappear. They are one of

6. Murray N. Rothbard, *Power and Market* (Auburn, Alabama: Mises Institute, [1970] 2006).

God's four ordained systems of government: self-government, church government, family government, and civil government. All four are sealed by an oath. All four involve sanctions.

Christians cannot legitimately adopt the libertarian quest to establish a world devoid of civil government. Sin mandates civil government and civil sanctions. The right of civil rulers to impose physical punishments is affirmed clearly by Paul in Acts 25. He affirms in Romans 13 the legitimacy of civil government among other legitimate governments. He says that rulers are ordained by God as His ministers. This is powerful language. It invokes the authority of God on behalf of the state. If Paul is correct, then anarcho-capitalism is incorrect. There is no way around this.

C. Crime vs. the Division of Labor

The threat of crime forces men to allocate scarce economic resources to the defense against criminals. The state is the primary institutional means of crime prevention. The state imposes negative sanctions on convicted criminals. The goal is to uphold justice by means of fear. "And the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother; Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you. And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you. And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot" (Deut. 19:18–21).[7] Fear adds to the cost to criminal behavior. As the economist says, when the cost of anything increases, other things remaining equal, less of it is demanded. This is the goal of negative civil sanctions: less crime.

The expense of crime-prevention reduces men's wealth. They believe that this expenditure prevents an even greater reduction of their wealth by criminals. Men find it more expensive to cooperate when crime increases. Their lives and property are less secure. This makes them more cautious about entering into cooperative ventures with people they do not know well. The information costs of dealing with strangers are high, and some people choose not to take these extra risks. Because of sin, the division of labor is reduced. Crime-prevention activities are a means of removing risk and increasing the level of

7. Gary North, *Inheritance and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Deuteronomy*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1999] 2012), ch. 45.

cooperation. Institutional authorities seek to reduce crime by imposing negative sanctions on law-breakers.

To maximize the division of labor in a world of sin, the state must impose negative sanctions only on law-breakers, biblically defined. By adding laws that go beyond the Bible, or even go counter to it, civil rulers reduce the division of labor. Legislators and bureaucrats who go beyond the Bible in seeking to stamp out illegal activities make it more expensive for people to cooperate voluntarily to achieve their ends. This reduces the division of labor. It therefore reduces people's wealth. The state thereby produces the same condition that criminals produce. The difference is, good men feel justified in defending themselves against criminals. They feel far less justified in defending themselves against the state. The predator state can become a greater threat to economic and social cooperation than the predator criminal class. In some cases, the state allies itself with the criminal class.[8]

Conclusion

Paul speaks of the illegitimacy of personal vengeance. He does not deny the legitimacy of vengeance as such. He says that God has restricted vengeance to legitimate civil governments. Civil power is supposed to restrain unpredictable personal violence, family feuds, and gang warfare.

The free market is not autonomous. It is an extension of the individual or the family, both of which operate under civil law. The free market is under civil law. Civil law covenantally is superior to the free market. The civil covenant establishes the conditions of the free market by shaping public behavior and attitudes. Civil law is enforced by rulers who are ministers of God. Taxation as such is not theft, contrary to some libertarian theorists. Most forms of taxation are theft, and all levels above the tithe surely are (I Sam. 8:15, 17), but not all. Lawful authorities are entitled to economic support. Taxation supports the state.

Paul calls on Christians to obey lawful authorities. This may mean challenging one authority in the name of another. Authorities are to some extent in competition with each other. It is not unlawful to pit one against the other, as Paul's tactics in Acts indicate. Freedom is sometimes achieved by using one authority to reduce the power of

8. In the early 1970s, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, in his multi-volume history, *The Gulag Archipelago*, said that this had long been the case in the Soviet Union.

another. Paul used Roman law to undermine Festus' desire to please the Jews. He lawfully removed himself from Festus' jurisdiction. A legal system should not be allowed to become monolithic.

12

DEBT-FREE LIVING

Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

ROMANS 13:8–10

The theocentric principle here is God as the lawgiver whose legal system is the outworking of His love. This is point three of the biblcal covenant: law.[1] By obeying God's law, we manifest our love to others. God commands that we love others. In doing so, we fulfill the law.

A. Debt: Secured and Unsecured

Paul begins with a command to avoid debt. He does not offer a reason. The Old Covenant did. Debt is a form of servitude. "The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender" (Prov. 22:7). Debt does offer benefits. If it didn't, people would avoid debt. But servitude also offers benefits. This is why the Mosaic law allowed men to become permanent slaves. "And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever" (Ex. 21:5–6).

1. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1987] 1992), ch. 3. Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory*, 5th ed. (Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision, [1980] 2010), ch. 3.

The hole in the ear was the mark of a voluntary Hebrew slave. It symbolized a man who could be physically pulled around by his master by means of a ring in the ear. A ring in an animal's nose enables his owner to insert a rope and pull him around.

Unsecured debt symbolizes a man's legal subordination to a creditor. If a debtor has indebted his body, his reputation, or his tools by means of a promise to repay out of his future earnings, then he is at risk. His future earnings may fall. His future expenses may rise. What if he cannot repay the loan? Until the late-nineteenth century, debtor's prison was common in the West. The debtor was put in prison until a relative paid off his debt. Today, he may legally declare bankruptcy, but he must sell most of his assets to repay his creditors.

Secured or collateralized debt is different. The loan is made to a borrower so that he can purchase an asset. If the borrower fails to repay, the creditor can legally take possession of the asset. The borrower then loses legal control over the asset, but he himself is not penalized, except possibly in the effects of a downgraded credit rating, i.e., his ability to take on debt. The creditor's legal claim is not against the debtor's person; it is against his debt-purchased asset.

A debtor today does not face the same degree of risk that debtors did in Paul's day. Because of the burden of debt, he may decide not to take certain risks that could threaten his income, such as quitting his job and moving out of town to look for a better job. His debt burden limits his physical mobility. But the mortgaged asset may give him greater upward social mobility, such as a tool or education that enables him to earn a larger income.

1. Debt and Deferred Delivery

Paul's general warning is in the form of a command. Do not owe anyone anything, he says. The advantages of debt should be avoided. Yet there is a hidden problem: the debt aspect of *any purchased asset that is not delivered immediately*. Say that a person buys a ticket to a future event. He wants to be sure that he can attend the event. The ticket's seller has become a debtor. The ticket's seller may choose to buy performance insurance in case the theater burns down. Then the insurer takes on the debt. This is a risk that the someone in a deferred delivery transaction has to bear: ticket-buyer, ticket-seller, or insurer. Is Paul saying that a Christian should never sell a ticket in advance? This would greatly increase the buyer's risk. If he waits until the last day to buy a ticket, the line may be long, forcing him to waste time.

The event may even be sold out before he gets to the front of the line. The risk of missing the event is inescapable, one way or another. Someone must bear it.

Then there is hired labor. A person goes to work. He is not paid in the morning. The Mosaic law mandated that he be paid in the evening. "Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him: the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning" (Lev. 19:13).[2] The employer in Jesus' parable of the hirelings honored this law (Matt. 20:8).[3] So, the Mosaic law allowed some very short-term debt. It had to. *Debt is inescapable in a labor contract*. Either the employer owes the worker at the end of the day, or else the worker owes the employer a day's work if he gets paid in the morning.

When a person writes a check to make a purchase, the check must clear before the transaction is settled. Until it clears, there remains a credit/debt aspect to the transaction. Must all transactions be made in cash? Doesn't this make things more risky for buyers, who must then carry cash? Aren't sellers at even greater risk? They have far more cash in the office than if checks and credit cards were allowed.

More than any other people, Americans use credit cards to buy items. For some period of time, credit card users are debtors, even if they plan to pay off the loan as soon as the bill arrives. The use of credit cards is a great convenience. But it establishes a debt.

A person may have a savings account at a bank. The bank that has allowed him to deposit his money is now a debtor to him. Is banking prohibited by Paul? It was not prohibited by Christ (Matt. 25:27).[4]

The world could not exist without debt, such as the employer's daily debt to workers or their debt to him if he has paid them in advance. The modern economy's high division of labor is funded by credit instruments, which are also debt instruments. If these were made illegal overnight, how could the modern world feed itself? The commodity futures markets are debt markets. They have made farming and other production activities less risky. Yet most futures contracts are forms of almost unsecured debt. Both parties to the transaction—long and short—present a small payment in advance, called margin, but in fact a performance bond. It is a small fraction of the total potential debt in most transactions.

2. Gary North, *Boundaries and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Leviticus*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1994] 2012), ch. 13.

3. Gary North, *Priorities and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Matthew*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 40.

4. *Ibid*., ch. 45.

Farmers borrow money to buy seed, fertilizer, fuel, and pay workers. Their property secures some of this debt. They are in bondage, but the Old Testament allowed people to be in bondage.

B. Unsecured Debt and the Division of Labor

There has been an enormous expansion of unsecured debt in the modern economy. No one knows how much unsecured debt there is. Futures contracts are basically unsecured debt. The conventional estimate in December, 2003 was that, worldwide, there were about $170 trillion in unsecured financial promises to pay, called derivatives.[5] These were futures contracts, mostly ($142t) interest-rate guesses.

The overwhelming majority of the world's output is based on the extension of credit. Therein lies the threat. The modern system of deferred payments depends on an unbroken chain of payments. If debtor A cannot pay creditor B until debtor C pays creditor A, then there is a possibility of a collapse of the payments system if debtor C cannot repay. Near-universal bankruptcies would paralyze mass production. People produce in order to sell their output. Without expectation of payment, producers cease producing. Their suppliers cease making deliveries, as will their suppliers, all the way down the production line.

The modern world is wealthy beyond historical comparison, but its output rests on faith: faith in unbroken payments by debtors to creditors. Everyone assumes, implicitly or explicitly, that most creditors know what they are doing when they lend, and that most debtors know their limitations when they borrow. There is no way to prove in advance that this faith rests on legitimate assumptions. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). This definition of faith does not apply only to faith in God. It applies to faith in everything that we rely on to sustain us.

The expansion of credit/debt has increased the division of labor to levels undreamed of before World War II. Credit has made capital available to entrepreneurs, who have used this borrowed money to add to the productive capacity of their businesses. They have, in the words of the Austrian School economists, lengthened the structure of production. They have increased the specialization of production on the assumption that customers will buy the output of these specialized, price-competitive systems of production. People in

5. *Detailed data on over-the-counter (OTC) derivatives markets* (Basle, Switzerland: Bank for International Settlements, 2004), Tables D-1, D-2, D-3. Gold was $370 per ounce.

their capacity as producers have cooperated with buyers by becoming more specialized in their efforts to meet expected future demand. They have abandoned older, less specialized jobs to become more specialized and more productive. Credit has financed this extension of the division of labor all over the world. The problem comes when credit—especially unsecured credit—collapses in a wave of defaults. What happens then to customer demand? It falls. What happens to the highly specialized structure of production? It becomes unprofitable. The extended cooperation that had been induced by the growth of unsecured credit is reversed. There is now far less cooperation. This produces unemployment.

A collapse of the debt-based payments system would kill millions of people in the industrial world—possibly hundreds of millions. We depend on a complex system of production to sustain us. Very few urban people could survive if the system of debt-based payments completely collapsed. Very few commercial farmers could stay in business: no money to buy seeds, fuel, pesticides, and fertilizer. There would be no money to pay workers. Barter would replace today's electronic money. The division of labor would collapse. So, output would collapse. In the West, this would be a death sentence for millions of people.

Is such a breakdown in the payments system possible? Yes. But governments and central banks would then flood the financial system with fiat paper money to replace frozen contracts for electronic money. There are physical limits on the production of modern paper money, but governments could lower the paper's quality standards and crank out lots of paper bills with extra zeroes. This would threaten the world with mass inflation as an overreaction to the collapse of payments. There would be great uncertainty and enormous financial losses.

The extension of credit is the extension of debt. The modern world has prospered for at least two centuries because it has ignored Paul's warning, assuming that his warning was meant to be universal. Was it?

C. Lenders Without Borrowers?

Paul knew the words of Moses: "For the LORD thy God blesseth thee, as he promised thee: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, but thou shalt not borrow; and thou shalt reign over many nations, but they

shall not reign over thee" (Deut. 15:6).[6] "The LORD shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow" (Deut. 28:12).[7] This promise was given to a very small nation. International trade was minimal. There were no banks or futures markets. God's message was clear: by extending credit, Israelites would be extending control over foreigners. They were in effect planting seeds in another man's garden. Foreigners would be in debt to God through debt to God's people. Extending credit was a means of extending God's dominion.

This means that taking on debt that was extended by foreigners was a means of surrendering God's kingdom to them. "The stranger that is within thee shall get up above thee very high; and thou shalt come down very low. He shall lend to thee, and thou shalt not lend to him: he shall be the head, and thou shalt be the tail" (Deut. 28:43–44).[8] The Mosaic law recognized the two-sided nature of the transaction. For every credit, there is a debt, and vice versa.

The institutional reconstruction of society will come whenever the world adopts saving faith in the God of the Bible. As more people come under Paul's command, there will be fewer willing debtors. This is a serious analytical issue for anyone who believes that there will be an unprecedented period of blessing for the church after the conversion of the Jews, which Paul believed.[9] Where will God-fearing borrowers be after the world turns to Christ? If they heed Paul's warning, they will pay off their consumer debts and not take on new ones. The Mosaic prophecy regarding credit extension to foreign nations will no longer be valid, if by "foreign" God meant "covenant-breaking," which He presumably did.

If men refuse to borrow against hoped-for but uncertain future earnings, investors will have to buy ownership, which is risky, rather than settle for fixed payments. Paul's command, if obeyed, means that in a progressively covenant-keeping world, the sale of ownership will replace debt as the primary means of funding new business projects. Owners will raise money for new business projects, not by borrowing money, but by selling shares of ownership to investors. There are only four ways to raise money for a profit-seeking project, other than

6. Gary North, *Inheritance and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Deuteronomy*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1999] 2012), ch. 37.

7. *Ibid.*, ch. 69.

8. *Idem.*

9. Chapter 7.

begging: (1) borrow money from interest-seeking creditors, (2) sell partial ownership to investors, (3) put up your own money, (4) borrow from your customers. The best example of the fourth method is a subscription to a periodical. The subscriber pays the full subscription price to the publisher, and the publisher becomes a debtor for the period of the subscription.

1. Reduced Risk

A slow, steady shift from credit investing to equity investing would reduce the likelihood of a financial breakdown due to a collapse of the payments system. The main threat to the payments system today is the widespread use of uncollateralized debt that is treated as money or near-money. A large default could create a domino effect. If nobody can pay his creditors until he is paid by his debtors, nobody will be paying. The monetary system is based on fractional reserves—uncollateralized loans—so the division of labor is at risk.

If businessmen ever refuse to borrow, creditors will have to buy ownership, which is risky, rather than settle for fixed payments. In a world where investors refuse to enter into unsecured, uncollateralized debt contracts, payments would be based on warehouse receipts for money metals. A warehouse receipt appears to be a form of debt—an IOU—but it is fully collateralized by an asset. It is better understood as proof of legal title to physical property. The warehouse receipt is not a debt that is issued by a creditor against uncertain future income. It is simply proof of existing title to a physical resource. The existing owner of the warehouse receipt exchanges it for another asset: goods or services. The recipient of the warehouse receipt must pay the warehouse for the services of storage and safekeeping. The owner of the stored asset is billed daily through an automatic digital payments system. When he sells the asset, the new owner begins paying. This is easy to do with computerized payments.

Ownership carries with it responsibilities. There are no free lunches in life, other than God's grace, paid for by Christ at Calvary. Therefore, whenever paper money or electronic money circulates free of charge, deception has to be involved somewhere in the series of transactions. Perhaps some precious metals storage company has issued receipts for monetary metals not on deposit. These receipts are spent into circulation by the issuer. This is a form of theft. It is fraudulent. This practice should be treated by civil courts as illegal. In the case of commercial banking, fractional reserves are universal. Banks

make loans while simultaneously promising depositors the right to withdraw their money at any time. This is a form of counterfeiting. Its results are price inflation and the boom-bust cycle.[10]

D. Replacing Credit With Equity Ownership

Paul's general principle here is debt-free living. The threat is debt servitude: an economic obligation that can result in physical servitude. As we have seen, the Mosaic law made provision for servitude, including voluntary servitude. Sometimes servitude is preferable to liberty for some people, but it is always a condition of reduced personal responsibility. There are times when temporary debt is a means of dominion. A debt to fund one's education can be a means of dominion: temporary economic servitude in preparation for dominion. Also, when a debt is offset by collateral, such as a house, debt can be a tool of dominion. Buying a house from someone who wants a stream of income—a creditor—and then renting it to a person who is not ready or able to go into debt to buy a house, is a way to build capital. The renter pays the house's owner monthly, who in turn pays off the creditor. The creditor can repossess the house if the buyer defaults. He keeps all of the money paid by the buyer, and he reclaims his capital asset. This is a means of risk-reduction on the part of the creditor. He prefers to lend to a buyer with the house as security for the loan, rather than lend to some impersonal third party with no collateral to repossess, such as a bank.

Some owners of capital prefer to extend collateralized credit rather than buy an equity position (ownership). They seek out borrowers. This is biblical. In a Christian world that obeyed Paul's injunction, however, creditors would find fewer and fewer low-risk borrowers. Interest rates would then diverge sharply: falling for Christian borrowers and rising for non-Christians. Rates would fall because of these conditions: a fixed or increasing supply of loanable funds and decreasing demand for debt. The potential economic returns from purchasing ownership shares would look better. This change in people's borrowing habits would move the world's investors toward equity investing. Until then, lending is legitimate.

What about borrowing from a creditor-seller to purchase an income-producing asset that serves as collateral for the debt? This form of borrowing places the borrower at risk of losing money that he has

10. Murray N. Rothbard, *Man, Economy, and State: A Treatise on Economic Principles*, 2nd ed. (Auburn, Alabama: Mises Institute, [1962] 2009), ch. 10.

paid to the seller—i.e., the buyer-borrower's equity in the asset—but it does not place his other assets at risk. By paying down the debt each month, the asset's buyer becomes an equity investor, month by month. He can lose title to this equity if he ever stops paying. There is risk of loss. But there is always risk in life. The question is: How much risk? The buyer-debtor does not place his other assets at risk, only the down payment and the equity built up over time. Businesses are sold on this basis all the time. So is real estate.

A seller-financed sale of an income-generating asset makes the seller a creditor and the borrower a long-run equity purchaser. Both parties bear risk. Each bears the kind of risk he prefers. The seller may have to repossess the asset some day, but if it has a market price, he still owns equity in the asset. He can sell it if he chooses. The buyer risks having to surrender ownership of the asset, thereby losing all of his equity. But the loss of one's equity position—sale price above purchase price—is possible in any purchase of equity, with or without debt.

I do not think that Paul is here condemning a fully collateralized loan. If there were low debt in society, investment would have to shift to the purchase of equity. Paul's injunction, when coupled with post-millennialism, is a call to substitute equity for debt in investing. *A collateralized loan is an equity investment*. There is a debt element in the transaction, but essentially it is an equity investment. By paying off the loan, the debtor buys equity. This is consistent with the results of Paul's injunction in a Christian social order: to replace credit with equity in the portfolios of covenant-keepers and to reduce unsecured debt by covenant-keepers.

E. The Law and Love

"Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law." John Murray does not think that love is an obligation. Rather, the sense of the passage is this: "Owe no man any thing, only love one another."[11] "He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law." But what does this mean? Does it mean that dealing with others justly is the way that we should demonstrate our love toward them? Or does it mean that loving them fulfills the law? Which law? Moses' law? Christ's law?

Paul says which law: the Mosaic. "For this, Thou shalt not commit

11. John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1959, 1965), II, p. 159.

adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (v. 9). This summary follows the Septuagint's translation of Deuteronomy 5:17–21.[12] The final clause is based on Leviticus: "Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD" (Lev. 19:18). Here is the same theme as the one Paul introduced in the previous chapter: *no personal vengeance*. Christ used a similar approach in his summary of the Mosaic law. "And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matt. 19:16–19).[13]

Love is mandatory, Murray writes. "If love is the fulfillment of the law this means that no law is fulfilled apart from love. . . . It is only through love that we can fulfill the demands of justice."[14] Murray places the decalogue, and through it, the Mosaic law, at the heart of Paul's injunction. "This appeal to the decalogue demonstrates the following propositions: (1) the decalogue is of permanent and abiding relevance. (2) It exemplifies the *law* that love fulfills and is therefore correlative with love. (3) The commandments and their binding obligation do not interfere with the exercise of love; there is no incompatibility. (4) The commandments are the norms in accordance with which love operates."[15]

Conclusion

Paul writes that debt is something to be avoided. Debt is the antithesis of love. Love fulfills the law, not by abolishing the Mosaic law, but by filling it to the brim.[16] The Mosaic law identified debt as something to be avoided (Deut. 28:44). So does Paul. The debt he has in

12. *Ibid.*, II, p. 161.

13. Gary North, *Priorities and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Matthew*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2000] 2012), ch. 38.

14. Murray, *Romans*, II, p. 161.

15. *Ibid.*, II, pp. 161–62.

16. *Ibid.*, II, p. 164.

mind is a debt that places an individual at the mercy of the creditor. Jesus described hell as debtor's prison (Matt. 18:34). Paul was not arguing that all debt is evil—just those forms that place a defaulting debtor at risk of his loss of liberty or reputation. Unsecured debt is to be avoided. It presumes too much on the future.

13

THE DAY (NOT THE NIGHT) IS AT HAND

> *And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.*
>
> ROMANS 13:11–14

The theocentric focus here is sanctification: ethics. This is point three of the biblical covenant.[1] Its goal is to motivate God's people to righteous living. Sanctification means to put on Christ: to submit to His Bible-revealed law through His grace. Paul is writing to converts, not the unregenerate. He is not talking about conversion. He is talking about progressive sanctification.

A. The Meaning of Salvation

This passage is an eschatological time text. The meaning is clear: there is not much time remaining. Time remaining for what? "Our salvation." What is this salvation? The commentators disagree. John Murray believes that it refers to the second coming of Christ in final judgment.[2] So does amillennialist William Hendriksen.[3] Others see

1. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1987] 1992), ch. 3. Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory*, 5th ed. (Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision, [1980] 2010), ch. 3.

2. John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1959, 1965), II, pp. 165–70.

3. William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of Paul's Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1982), pp. 441–47.

Paul as referring to the individual's death. This eschatology is therefore personal.[4] Finally, some view it as referring to the end of the Old Covenant order and the delivery of the kingdom of God exclusively to the church (Matt. 21:43).[5] This is my view.

1. Salvation Delayed

Murray and Hendriksen knew the problem that their interpretation raises: after nineteen centuries, there is still no deliverance for a world in sin, no fulfillment of the promise. If this interpretation is correct, then Paul was trying to motivate people to act ethically, using the hope of Christ's second coming as the motivation. Liberal theologians use this passage and other "imminent deliverance" passages to argue that New Testament authors were incorrect. The authors supposedly believed that Jesus was coming in final judgment in the immediate future. The early church fathers then had to re-think their plans for the church because this prophecy did not come true. In other words, there are major prophetic errors in the New Testament.

Murray and Hendriksen cited II Peter 3:8 as justification for their interpretation. "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."[6] This converts a time text to a non-time text. This passage in Second Peter does not solve their problem, namely, the language of Paul's text. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand." Was Paul justifying his command to live chastely on the basis of an event that still has not come to pass? What kind of deceptive motivational tactic was this?

Liberal expositors argue that this strategy backfired on the church within a generation, that the early believers' focus on Christ's imminent return as their motivation for living righteously could not be sustained. The early church's leaders then had to find new motivations. They also had to explain away the obvious inconsistency. Murray and Hendriksen were still trying to explain it away. They did so by converting a time text—"soon"—to a timeless text. Murray wrote: "It is the nearness of prophetic perspective and not that of our chrono-

4. Hendriksen cites W. Sandy and A. C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (International Critical Commentary (1911), p. 378, and S. Greijdanus, *De Brief van den Apostel Paulus aan de Genente te Rome*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam, 1933), II, p. 578. Hendriksen, Romans, p. 445n.

5. Roderick Campbell, *Israel and the New Covenant* (Tyler, Texas: Geneva Divinity School Press, [1954] 1981), p. 107.

6. Murray, *Romans*, II, p. 168; Hendriksen, *Romans*, p. 446.

logical calculations."[7] Hendriksen wrote: "The error is committed not by Paul but by us *when we apply earth's chronology to heaven's mode of life*."[8] This does not solve their problem. A liberal can easily respond: "It is not our interpretational error alone, but also the error of the recipients of Paul's epistle. They were supposed to conclude from his language that they should live righteously, for Christ was coming back in final judgment soon. They were thinking temporally, in terms of their own life spans, which was exactly how Paul was telling them to think, in order to motivate them to live righteously in the present. The following argument would not have been highly motivational: 'Live righteously because Jesus is coming back in final judgment soon, by which I mean up to twenty centuries from now, and possibly a lot more.' By deceiving them regarding Christ's imminent return, Paul was either a charlatan or a false prophet." Of course, a theological liberal would not accuse Paul in this way, for he might lose his teaching or preaching job. He would say, "Paul's intensity regarding the need for holy living in the church led him to place a short timetable on Christ's judgment." Murray and Hendriksen refused even to consider this obvious response by liberals. Why? I think it is because they could not reply effectively to it in terms of their denial of the time element in this text. They also did not respond exegetically to either the "judgment at one's death" argument or the "judgment on Old Covenant Israel" argument.

2. Individual Judgment at Death

The argument that Paul was referring to a person's death has defenders. It acknowledges the obvious meaning of Paul's language: *soon*. The night is far gone, Paul says. Jesus used language in a similar way: "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work" (John 9:4). But there is a problem: Jesus said that the *day* was almost gone. Paul says that the *night* is almost gone. Jesus said that He was working hard before darkness fell, presumably referring to His death. Every person faces this night, He said. A man can work only while he is still alive. But Paul is saying that the day is coming. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand." He calls on members of the Roman church to change their evil ways before daybreak arrives.

That does "night" mean in this context? In what way was the night

7. Murray, *Romans*, II, p. 168.
8. Hendriksen, *Romans*, p. 446.

far spent? Not every member of the church at Rome was old when Paul's letter arrived. In fact, the majority were not old, unless the Roman church was a statistical anomaly. Some members would have been youngsters. In what way were their nights far spent? Their lives lay ahead of them. If Paul's reference was to each individual's death, then night and day had to apply differently to different members.

Paul's use of "day" does not refer to the day of the Lord in final judgment of all humanity. The time element was too specific: soon. It has been too long since Paul wrote. But "day" also cannot apply to individual's judgment at death, for Paul was calling them out of a prevailing darkness. The contrast between night, which was far spent, and daybreak, which was close at hand, could not have applied equally to all of the recipients of his message. In matters of personal lifespan, a few people are at the end of the night—sin-filled living—while the majority have their lives to lead. Paul was not referring to the statistical possibility that all of them could die the next day, for that probability was low. In any case, his language was not probabilistic; it was emphatic: the night was far spent.

B. The End of the Old Covenant Order

Jesus had made it clear that the next great eschatological event would be the fall of Jerusalem. He told His listeners specifically:

> And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh (Luke 21:20–28).

In the parallel Matthew passage, the reference to "coming in the clouds" appears in verse 30. "And then shall appear the sign of the

Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled" (Matt. 24:30–34). Verse 34 says that the generation that was listening to Him would not pass before all of this would be fulfilled. This specifically includes His coming in the clouds. This phrase has to apply to the fall of Jerusalem. It does not refer to the end of history and the final judgment.

Liberal theologians accuse Jesus of making an error. He supposedly thought that He would return in final judgment within one generation, but He did not return in this way. Paul was merely being faithful to Jesus' time perspective regarding final judgment when he passed along this misinterpretation to the church at Rome. They both believed that night was ending for this sin-filled world. They were both wrong.

When the fall of Jerusalem takes place, Jesus had said, "look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28). What redemption? Not final judgment. This has yet to take place. Not personal judgment at death. Jesus was warning His followers to flee Jerusalem when they saw these signs. He wanted them to avoid being killed. The church survived the fall of Jerusalem. Then what happened? Liberation. His words can mean only one thing: *redemption from the bondage of the Old Covenant order*. This is also the meaning of Paul's use of salvation in Romans 13:11: "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." The Greek word for salvation (*soter*) is used repeatedly in the New Testament to mean "deliverance." "That we should be **saved** from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us" (Luke 1:71). "What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. For I know that this shall turn to my **salvation** through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:18–19). "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the **saving**

of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith" (Heb. 11:7).

Gary DeMar listed three pages of New Testament prophetic time texts. Romans 13:11 was one of them. These texts are specific. They say that certain events will take place soon, or before the listeners die, or are near at hand.[9] Commentators who attempt to place the fulfillment of these prophecies in the distant future are fair game for liberals who reply that New Testament authors obviously did not know what they were talking about when they used the language of imminence.

1. The Jewish Revolt

Prior to A.D. 66, the church was under continual persecution by the Jews. This included the gentile churches. The Jews still had influence with local Roman administrations. In Thessolonica: "But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus. And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things" (Acts 17:5–8). Jews were not always successful in their efforts to get the government to suppress the gospel, but they tried. "And when Gallio[10] was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat, Saying, This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law. And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you: But if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters. And he drave them from the judgment seat" (Acts 18:12–16).

When the Jews revolted against Rome, beginning in A.D. 66, their influence with Rome disappeared. For the next four years, Roman legions battled Jewish military forces in Palestine. Then, in A.D. 70,

9. Gary DeMar, *Last Days Madness: Obsession of the Modern Church* (Atlanta, Georgia: American Vision, 1999), pp. 38–40.

10. L. Junius Gallio Annaenus, the brother of the philosopher Seneca. He was proconsul in Corinth under the emperor Claudius in the early 50s. See Dennis McCallum, "A Chronological Study of Paul's Ministry."

Jerusalem fell to the Roman siege. The temple was burned. This put an end to the Old Covenant order. Jesus' prophecy, recorded in Matthew 24 and Luke 21, was fulfilled. Some members of the generation that had heard His words were still alive when the siege of Jerusalem began. Far fewer were alive when it ended.

The end of the Old Covenant order was the context of Paul's remarks at the end of the epistle: "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen" (Rom. 16:20).

C. The Transfer of the Kingdom

Paul here tells the church at Rome that their deliverance is drawing nigh. He assures them that they will not live under Jewish persecution forever. This did not mean that an era of peace with Rome was imminent, but this conflict would be between Christ and Caesar, not Christ and Caiphas. The church's confrontation with Rome led in the late fourth century to the replacement of Roman paganism with Christianity as the religion of the empire.

Paul tells the church to adopt holy living. The long night of the Old Covenant order is drawing to a close, Paul tells them. A far better covenant—Christ's—is about to replace the Old Covenant. The church will soon see God transfer His kingdom to the church, just as Christ had told the Jews. "Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. 21:43). The fruits of righteousness are basic for identifying the recipient of this kingdom inheritance: the church. Jesus had said this; Paul repeats it here. Because of the imminent demise of the Old Covenant order, members of the church were therefore required to live differently from those around them. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying" (Rom. 13:13).

Paul offers a specific motivation for righteous living: the imminent dawning of the day. This cannot refer to the post-resurrection world of sin-free living, which has not yet arrived in our day. Whether it comes tomorrow or at a man's death is irrelevant for the call to righteous living. Righteous living is a moral obligation at all times. Then why does Paul emphasize the time factor here? What has the dawning of the day have to do with righteous living?

It has to do with the inheritance of the kingdom of God. In Romans 11, Paul spoke of the jealousy of the Jews against the gentiles (v. 11). Someday, this jealousy will lead to the conversion of the Jews, he told them. The original olive tree's branches, which were in the process of being cut off for the sake of the grafting in of the branches of the wild olive tree, will someday be grafted in again. This grafting in, Paul says in Romans 11, will mark the fulness of the gentiles.[11] But the original branches had not yet been completely cut off in history in his day. They were fighting the replacement process. They were attacking the church: the replacement branches. God's transfer of the kingdom of God was still in transition. It had not yet been completed. When would this transition period end? Paul makes this clear in Romans 13: soon. The transfer took place in A.D. 70, but the actual date was not known to the apostles. They knew only that it was close at hand.

The kingdom would be transferred to that nation whose citizens showed the fruits of righteousness, Jesus had said. The church was required by Christ to demonstrate publicly its commitment to living righteously. Paul tells them here, "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof" (v. 14). To replace the Old Covenant order, the church must live in a way ethically superior to the Jews. Jesus had said as much: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:17–20). Gentile Christians during the transition period had a responsibility: to live ethically, so that the transfer could take place.

Does this mean that the transfer was conditional? Yes, in the same way that the promise to Abraham was ritually conditional: circumcision. It was a promise, but it was also conditional. This does not mean that the outcome of the promise was in doubt. The church's ethical performance would be acceptable. This had been foreordained. "For we

11. Chapter 7.

are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10).

D. Future-Orientation

In chapter 11, Paul told them that there will be a future conversion of the Jews. This re-grafting will bring in an era of extreme blessings for the church. Paul did not say when this will happen, only that it will happen. His readers were not being told to shorten their time horizons. They were not being told that the era of the gentiles will be short. They were being told that the dawn was at hand; the long night was coming to an end. Dawn is not evening. This was not a call to short-term thinking. The day would last a long time, just as the night had. *This was not an apocalyptic message*. On the contrary, it was a call to patience. Do not expect the end of the world, Paul was telling them. Before there is an end to this world, two things must take place: the conversion of the Jews and an era of kingdom blessing that will follow this conversion.

When Paul told them in this section that their salvation was drawing nigh, he meant that the era of church's exclusive kingdom would soon begin. The kingdom of God was being shared with the Jews in Paul's day, which is why he continued to honor the high priest (Acts 23:5). Paul had already told the church that not until the fulness of the gentile era is complete will the Jews be converted. "Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?" (Rom. 11:12). This diminishing process was still going on. The era of gentile kingdom exclusivity had not yet begun. Until it did begin, and then continue for an unspecified period, there could be no completion of the gentile era. "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in" (Rom. 11:25).

Paul's epistle to the Romans in no way can be classified as apocalyptic, as if the end of the world had been near. On the contrary, the epistle told the readers that the end of the world was not near. The end of the Old Covenant order was near.

1. Economic Growth

Time perspective is important for a theory of economic growth. The shorter that men's future-orientation is, the higher their rate of

interest is. They want to attain their near-term goals at the price of not fulfilling long-term goals. They discount the present value of both future income and future costs. The importance of the future recedes rapidly at higher rates of interest.

The child does not think of his old age. He does not plan for it. He does not defer enjoyments in the present for the sake of greater wealth in his old age. Analogously, individuals who place a low value on the future do not save and invest as much money as individuals do who place a high value on the future. The same is true of societies. Men get what they pay for. Those who want instant gratification at the expense of future gratification achieve their goal by spending on consumer goods and services rather than saving. Emotional maturity involves a recognition of the uncertainty of the future and also the present cost of attaining income in the future. Extreme present-orientation is a mark of an immature person or an immature society.

Had Paul been teaching a doctrine of the imminent return of Christ in final judgment, he would have created extreme present-orientation in the minds of his followers. This was not his intention. It was not Christ's intention, either. Paul taught, as Christ had taught, that the transfer of the kingdom of God to the church was taking place, and that it would be completed soon. Then the exclusive kingdom era of the gentiles would begin.

E. Cooperation With Future Generations

Edmund Burke, in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), made an observation that has become one of the pillars of conservative political philosophy. In his chapter on "The Church of France," he wrote:

> Society is indeed a contract. Subordinate contracts for objects of mere occasional interest may be dissolved at pleasure—but the state ought not to be considered as nothing better than a partnership agreement in a trade of pepper and coffee, calico or tobacco, or some other such low concern, to be taken up for a little temporary interest, and to be dissolved by the fancy of the parties. It is to be looked on with other reverence; because it is not a partnership in things subservient only to the gross animal existence of a temporary and perishable nature. It is a partnership in all science; a partnership in all art; a partnership in every virtue, and in all perfection. As the ends of such a partnership cannot be obtained in many generations, it becomes a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are to be born.[12]

12. Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), I:3:3.

Burke used economic terms—contract, partnership—to describe what we would call a covenant. He viewed the social contract as a covenant: *sealed by an oath*. "Each contract of each particular state is but a clause in the great primaeval contract of eternal society, linking the lower with the higher natures, connecting the visible and invisible world, according to a fixed compact sanctioned by the inviolable oath which holds all physical and all moral natures, each in their appointed place."[13]

Paul was calling the Roman church to take a similar view of their church membership. They belonged to an institution that will survive into eternity (Rev. 21; 22). The day was at hand, he said, not the night. They were part of a covenant made with them by the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Their good works will bear fruit into eternity, he was telling them.

In this sense, they were in a partnership, just as Burke described it. This partnership extended backward to Abraham and forward to our day. It was, and remains, cross-generational. This means that they were cooperating with generations yet to come. So are we. We are called by God to extend the work of the patriarchs, and in doing so, we extend this ancient legacy into the future. We are supposed to add value to this legacy. The late-twentieth-century's marketing term, *value-added*, is a good one. It accurately describes what entrepreneurs are supposed to do with scarce economic resources. This is the underlying meaning of the phrase, "buy low, sell high." To do this, the would-be seller must add value. So must buyers, who bid up the price of the asset.

Conclusion

This passage is often incorrectly interpreted as a prophecy of the imminent bodily return of Christ in final judgment. What it taught was that a long night was coming to a close, and the day would soon dawn. This also did not refer to their imminent deaths as individuals, which would take place at different times in the congregation. Some would die soon; others would die decades later. There would be no simultaneous dawning of the day, if "day" is interpreted as physical death.

What Paul taught in Romans 11–13 was the establishment of the New Covenant church on the ruins of the Old Covenant order. This is

13. *Idem*.

an important eschatological concept. It is inherently future-oriented. It should move covenant-keeping men's thinking from the expectation of the imminent end of this world to a vision of an unprecedented expansion of God's kingdom in history: the fulness of the gentiles and beyond. This establishes future-orientation. When believed, it redirects men's goals to a distant earthly future: a kingdom legacy that their spiritual heirs will inherit, more surely than their biological heirs will inherit their earthly wealth. This temporal vision identifies the kingdom of God in the broadest sense as the one institution capable of achieving compound growth until the end of time.

Christians are members of a cooperative venture with future generations. They are supposed to build today on the assumption that future generations will inherit. Each generation is supposed to add value to this legacy. This is also what the meaning of compound economic growth is: adding value, generation after generation, to the original capital base.

14

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

> *Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.*
>
> ROMANS 14:1–6

The theocentric focus of this passage is the honor of God. Different members of a church seek to honor God in different ways. The message here is that this honoring is legitimately a matter of individual decision-making: a matter of conscience. Neither the church nor its individual members should impose sanctions, positive or negative, for honoring God in one way at the expense of another way. Sanctions are point four of the biblical covenant.[1]

A. The Strong and the Weak

"For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs" (v. 2). Paul gets right to the point: some church mem-

1. Ray R. Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion By Covenant*, 2nd ed. (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, [1987] 1992), ch. 4. Gary North, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory*, 5th ed. (Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision, 2010), ch. 4.

bers are weak. He identifies a weak member: a person who refuses to eat a particular kind of food. This refusal is not a matter of the food's taste. It is a matter of taboo. The weak member believes that his commitment to Christ prohibits him from eating a particular food. Peter's initial response in Acts 10 is representative of this sense of taboo. God told Peter that the food taboos of the Mosaic law had ended. "And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven" (Acts 10:13–16). This revelation to Peter should have permanently ended the matter, but it did not, according to Paul's teaching here. Weaker members still had moral doubts about certain foods. So, Paul affirms God's revelation to Peter: *no food is unclean in God's eyes*. Nevertheless, in the eyes of weak Christians, there is uncleanliness in certain foods. One mark of spiritual maturity is the lack of such concern. Paul wrote: "I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean" (Rom. 14:14).

Paul teaches that some church members are theologically stronger than others. The strong ones, Paul says, are those who are free from any sense of taboo regarding the foods they eat. Paul is writing this to a gentile church. He knows that there may be Jews in the membership. There may be members who were recruited from religions that have food taboos. He does not say that these people must abandon these taboos for the sake of Christ. He says only that they should not condemn others who do not honor these taboos.

1. The Jerusalem Council

The Jerusalem council had already dealt with the issue of prohibited foods. Members who were part of the Pharisee sect had argued that gentiles must be circumcised and must obey the Mosaic law (Acts 15:5). The council met to settle this question. "And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.

Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they" (Acts 15:7–11). James followed Peter and made this suggestion: "Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood" (Acts 15:19–20). The council accepted this recommendation (vv. 22–29).

The deciding issue was not what kind of animal it was. The issue was its mode of death. Demonic paganism returns again and again to the drinking of blood. This is a matter of ritual.[2] *Drinking blood becomes a covenantal act*. Sometimes the drinking of blood is associated with taking the spirit of the slain animal into the drinker. The Mosaic law prohibited this by requiring the blood of an edible animal to be poured onto the ground and covered with dust. "And whatsoever man there be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, which hunteth and catcheth any beast or fowl that may be eaten; he shall even pour out the blood thereof, and cover it with dust" (Lev. 17:13). "Notwithstanding thou mayest kill and eat flesh in all thy gates, whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee: the unclean and the clean may eat thereof, as of the roebuck, and as of the hart. Only ye shall not eat the blood; ye shall pour it upon the earth as water" (Deut. 12:15–16). The Jerusalem council honored this prohibition, for the problem it dealt with still existed in the classical world: pagan ritual.

2. An Individual's Decision

Paul here tells the church at Rome that there should be no criticism within the fellowship regarding eating or not eating specific foods. Each member should do what he thinks honors God best: to abstain or to enjoy. The individual must make this decision, but only for himself. He is not to extend his personal self-assessment to others. Neither the strong Christian who treats all foods the same nor the weak Christian who avoids some foods should condemn the other. Paul's words could not be any clearer.

This means that the institutional church should not set up rules that prohibit certain foods. It also should not mandate certain foods,

2. There is a scene in the popular movie, *Red Dawn* (1984), in which modern young men are required to drink the blood of a slain deer as a means of initiation.

other than the Lord's Supper. Even in the case of the Lord's Supper, there are problems. Some fundamentalist denominations prohibit wine. In practice, so do many American Presbyterian congregations, in deference to former fundamentalists, who make up a significant percentage of conservative Presbyterian congregations. Paul's warning informs us that neither wine nor grape juice should be made mandatory, neither unleavened bread nor leavened bread. Both options should be made available.[3] But, of course, this rarely happens. A few congregations offer a choice between wine and grape juice; I have never seen one that offers leavened and unleavened bread.

Paul makes it clear that the chief issue here is the protection of the weak. "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak" (Rom. 14:21). In his first letter to the Corinthians, he elaborated on this theme.

> Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak. For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend (I Cor. 8:7–13).[4]

Paul is saying that it is not the theologically mature Christian who takes a stand against demon rum. It is the immature or spiritually weak Christian. He who dismisses any food or drink in God's name is a weak Christian, as defined by Paul. The problem is, in today's world, these weak Christians regard themselves as staunch defenders

3. The wine-grape juice division did not exist before the late nineteenth century. Prior to pasteurization, there was no commercial alternative to wine. In 1869, an anti-alcohol American dentist and Methodist, Dr. Thomas Welch, developed his non-fermented wine—today called grape juice—by boiling grape juice. He initially sold the product to churches that wanted a way to avoid alcohol in the communion meal. Welch's son took over the company on a part-time basis in 1872, and in 1896 made it his career. Even as late as 1914, it was the only fruit juice product on the market.

4. Gary North, *Judgment and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on First Corinthians*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2001] 2012), ch. 10.

of the faith, the last bastions of orthodoxy. Fundamentalists in the pews are oblivious to church history, and proud of it. To them, church history earlier than 1870 is mostly Roman Catholicism and Protestantism that was corrupted with Romish practices. If they have ever read about Eastern Orthodoxy—highly unlikely—they dismiss it as Catholicism with long beards. They are not impressed by the fact that the most conservative wings of Protestantism, "way back when"—Calvinism and Lutheranism—rejected this view of alcohol. They are adamant that no one should ever drink alcohol.

Their spiritual predecessors existed in Paul's day. They were advocates of a "taste not, touch not" form of Christianity. Paul challenged them: "Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh" (Col. 2:20–23). This challenge remains in force.

Paul says here what he says in I Corinthians 8: for the sake of the weaker brother, the stronger brother must avoid eating the food feared by the weaker.[5] "But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died. Let not then your good be evil spoken of: For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 14:15–17). "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves" (Rom. 15:1).

Does this mean that the stronger brother must alter his lifestyle for the sake of the weaker brother? No. It means that in instances where the two are brought together socially, the stronger brother must forebear. If the stronger brother had to imitate the weaker brother's standards at all times, then the church would be weakened. The "touch not, taste not" legalistic standards of immature Christians would predominate in the church. Paul surely did not want this to happen.

Yet this is what has happened to most conservative Presbyterian churches in the American South. In the Lord's Supper, they follow the cultural pattern of Baptists and Methodists: grape juice exclusively. Dr. Welch's biologically dead grape juice has become the Protestant fundamentalists' symbol of communion between God and

5. *Idem*.

man, thus making ridiculous Christ's analogy of new wine. "Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved" (Matt. 9:17). If the new wine is dead grape juice, the wineskin problem does not arise. The kingdom of God does not expand. If only the Jews had been able to pasteurize the gospel! They did their best, but they failed. The main way that they attempted to do this was to persuade the church to restore the Mosaic food laws and circumcision. The Jerusalem council called a halt to this.

If the stronger brother is supposed to capitulate to the weaker, then is the policy of exclusive grape juice correct? No. Paul says that each side must allow freedom to the other. Because the Lord's Supper is institutional, to mandate either exclusive wine or exclusive grape juice is wrong. Paul says that each side must be persuaded, and each must be tolerant. Allowing both wine and grape juice in communion upholds this principle.

The King James translation of the Greek word *katakrino* is "damnation." "And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23). Given Paul's view of the perseverance of the saints, this word should be translated as "condemned." It means that the person has condemned himself for his sin: acting against his conscience. This is how the Greek word is translated in the section in John on the woman taken in adultery. "When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (John 8:10–11).

B. Sabbath Observance

Paul does not limit his discussion to food and drink. He includes special days. "One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks" (vv. 5–6). Elsewhere, he wrote: "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or

of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ" (Col. 2:16–17). There, too, Paul linked food taboos and holiday taboos.

John Murray, a strict sabbatarian in the Scottish tradition, insisted that this passage does not apply to the weekly sabbath.[6] He referred to the sabbath as a creation ordinance. There is one overwhelming problem with this interpretation: there was no law mandating the sabbath observance prior to the miracle of the double output of manna on the day before the sabbath. There was a positive biological sanction for sabbath observance: the manna did not rot overnight on the night before the sabbath (Ex. 16:21–23). There was no negative judicial sanction.

An ordinance is a law. A church law may have positive or negative sanctions attached to it. A civil law has only negative sanctions. The state prohibits public evil; it does not seek to make men good. There is no mention of negative sanction for mankind with respect to sabbath-breaking prior to the Mosaic law.

There is a pre-Fall reference to God's blessing the sabbath: "And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made" (Gen. 2:2–3). There was a structure to God's creation week: six and one. There was to be structure to Adam's week: one and six.[7] But there was no law governing the sabbath. There was only one law in Eden: the law prohibiting access to one tree. There was no sabbath law from the Fall of Adam until the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20). Nehemiah said of the God of the covenant: "Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments: And madest known unto them thy holy sabbath, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant" (Neh. 9:13–14).

The issue here is law, not the underlying structure of man's work week. There is a recommended structure for the work week. God has announced it: six days of work, one day of rest. But this was not

6. John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1959, 1965), II, Appendix D.

7. Gary North, *Sovereignty and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Genesis* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1982] 2012), ch. 6.

what Adam had experienced. He had less than a full day of work on God's final day of creation. The Bible does not say whether he rested the next day. This six-one pattern was formally announced only after the exodus. *There was never any sabbath creation ordinance*. A law or ordinance must have sanctions attached. Without sanctions, a law is merely a suggestion. The Mosaic law had an explicit sanction: *execution*. "Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD: whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death" (Ex. 31:14–15). "Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you an holy day, a sabbath of rest to the LORD: whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death" (Ex. 35:2).[8]

There was no institutional sanction for sabbath-breaking prior to Exodus 31. What Paul teaches in this passage is this: with respect to the sabbath, the New Testament has reverted to the pre-Mosaic standard. *There is no longer any civil or ecclesiastical sanction attached to the New Testament sabbath*. This is why there was no covenantal problem for the church when, beginning early in the second century, it began shifting from Judaism's seventh-day worship to first-day worship. On what basis could this shift had been made, other than the annulment of the Mosaic covenant? Moses said: "Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant" (Ex. 31:16). Yet this law is not honored, for the church changed the day of worship to the eighth day. The sabbath was replaced by the Lord's day. This is why there was no theological problem in the centuries-long interim period, when it was not clear to all Christians which day was the proper day of worship.

Today, those few Protestant church traditions that emphasize strict sabbatarianism generally accept the use of tobacco and the consumption of alcohol. Those churches that prohibit alcohol and look askance on tobacco generally have a loose view of sabbath observance. One tradition emphasizes Paul's views on Christian freedom with respect to food and drink, while the other emphasizes Paul's views on Christian freedom regarding sabbath observance. Each denies the biblical basis of the other's doctrine of Christian freedom. This was not true

8. Gary North, *Authority and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Exodus* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), Part 3, *Tools of Dominion* (1990), ch. 59.

of either Luther or Calvin. Neither Calvin nor Luther was a strict sabbatarian, and both men defended Christian liberty regarding alcohol. The Lutheran tradition still upholds its founder's views. This is not equally true of modern Calvinists, e.g., whiskey-drinking Scottish sabbatarians or near-fundamentalist Presbyterians in the American South.

The church sets aside one day a week for corporate worship (Heb. 10:25). This is not the same as specifying judicially what should or should not be done outside of the worship service by its members, let alone non-members. The Mosaic law did do this, with a vengeance: execution. This mandated civil sanction is null and void today, all church traditions agree. What they do not agree about is the judicial basis for the annulment of this negative civil sanction apart from the annulment of the prohibition. In fact, they never discuss this crucial judicial issue. But if the annulment of the negative civil sanction was not accompanied by the annulment of the civil prohibition, then on what covenantal basis has the civil sanction been annulled?

The theological answer, based on the New Covenant, is found in this passage and in Colossians 2: the transfer of the locus of sovereignty in sabbath enforcement from the civil government to the conscience.[9] The church is also not to impose sanctions against sabbath violators; it also does not possess lawful authority in this area. Paul transferred this authority to the individual conscience. The same is true for Paul's other applications of the principle of Christian liberty, the "taste not, touch not" issues.

The Mosaic civil sanctions that enforced the fourth commandment have been annulled. Israel's civil government had been authorized by God—indeed, required—to enforce the fourth commandment, and to do so with its ultimate penalty: execution. The language of the sabbath statutes in Exodus is clear. So is the story of the stick-gatherer in Numbers 15. His crime was not a matter of a ritual act of rebellion. It was a matter of work.[10] He had not profaned the temple; he had profaned the sabbath.

The New Testament church has always denied the right of execution to the state with respect to sabbath violations, as well it should. It thereby has acknowledged in principle that *there has been a fundamental judicial change in the covenantal administration of one of the*

9. North, *Authority and Dominion*, Part 2, *Decalogue and Dominion* (1986), ch. 24.

10. He was not found in the act of kindling a fire on the sabbath, which was prohibited (Ex. 35:3). He was found working.

Ten Commandments. Nevertheless, churches for almost two millennia have refused to state the theological reason for this shift. The state enforces laws against murder, theft, adultery, and perjury. The church has applauded this down through the centuries. The state has at times enforced laws against Lord's day-breaking, but not by means of the Mosaic law's mandatory civil sanction. Does this mean that the New Covenant regards Lord's day violations as less profane than the Old Covenant did? If so, why?

The judicial issue here is the transfer of the locus of authority for the enforcement of the fourth commandment: from the state and local church to the individual conscience.[11] Paul established the principle of the authority of the conscience regarding the honoring of special days. He did not exclude from this principle the sabbath or Lord's Day. When he spoke of holy days, he was not speaking only of special days other than the Jewish sabbath, whether Jewish or gentile in their origin. On the contrary, the sabbath was the one day that would have been the common holy day in both Jewish and gentile congregations.

C. Cooperation Within the Church

By identifying the conscience as the proper sanctioning agency in matters of food, drink, and sabbath observance, Paul provided a way for weak and strong Christians to cooperate institutionally. He taught that the church should remain a place where spiritually weak and strong Christians will forebear one another's views regarding taboos: food, drink, and sabbath.

is advice has rarely been taken since the Protestant Reformation. Protestant churches have split on taboo issues. In American fundamentalism, the taboo over alcohol is a major one. The taboo over sabbath observance is not. In practice, Scottish Presbyterian elders do not enforce discipline over nonsabbatarian members, no matter how many sermons they preach on the sabbath. Institutionally, Paul's injunction is honored on matters sabbatarian. But in fundamentalist congregations, demon rum is still the biggest demon around. The once-powerful demons of gambling, dancing, and movies have faded into the background. The demon tobacco is still lurking in the shadows, but smoking has faded in popularity in the United States, except

11. I have yet to see a detailed critique—or any published critique—of my thesis regarding the New Testament's transfer of the locus of sovereignty governing sabbath enforcement. I published my chapter in 1986. There has been plenty of time for sabbatarian critics to respond. They are conspicuously silent.

possibly among the generation reaching adulthood in 2000. Secularists have adopted this demon as their very own. They are more vocal in their opposition to tobacco than fundamentalists are.

Protestant denominations have divided over theology and taboos for almost five centuries. But, once established, the denominations' divisions over taboos tend to decrease. It is less expensive to transfer membership to a different denomination than to convince a majority of today's members to reconsider a taboo. Taboos define some denominations, but splits generally do not come because of debates about traditional taboos. They come over theological issues or personality issues. Cooperation may occasionally take place among denominations, but on the whole, traditional taboos remain institutionalized. Weak and strong Christians form their own denominations. All of them regard themselves as strong.

Conclusion

With respect to the Mosaic laws governing foods, they are completely abolished under the New Covenant. Jesus made the general point: "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man" (Matt. 15:11). God announced this change of administration to Peter in Acts 10. Paul brought the same message to gentile churches. The implication was inescapable: the cultural separation between gentile and Jewish cultures was no longer in force. This separation had been imposed by dietary restrictions on the Jews. It was over. So was circumcision. The new man in Christ had replaced the old man in Moses. "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all" (Col. 3:9–11).

There were never any prohibitions on the use of alcohol outside the boundaries of the temple (Lev. 10:9). In fact, the consumption of alcohol was encouraged by God's law. The following passage is simply never discussed by defenders of total abstinence:

> And thou shalt eat before the LORD thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the LORD thy God always. And if the way be too long for thee, so that thou art not able to carry it; or if the place be too far from

> thee, which the LORD thy God shall choose to set his name there, when the LORD thy God hath blessed thee: Then shalt thou turn it into money, and bind up the money in thine hand, and shalt go unto the place which the LORD thy God shall choose: And thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for **strong drink**, or for whatsoever thy soul desireth: and thou shalt eat there before the LORD thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou, and thine household, And the Levite that is within thy gates; thou shalt not forsake him; for he hath no part nor inheritance with thee (Deut. 14:23–27).[12]

The Hebrew word for "strong drink" is found in other passages. Strong drink was prohibited to those who took a Nazarite vow. Also prohibited were grapes and raisins. "He shall separate himself from wine and strong drink, and shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes, or dried" (Num. 6:3). Strong drink was not for priests who were inside the temple (Lev. 10:9).[13] Strong drink was also not for kings, as a general rule of personal conduct (Prov. 31:4). But it was all right for anyone else who was not addicted to it. It was even recommended. "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts" (Prov. 31:6).

Activities on the sabbath come under the same liberating rule. Based on the evidence from the New Testament, Christians are not legitimately bound by *institutional* requirements to conduct themselves in a special way on Sundays, other than to attend church. They must attend church because of the general rule to assemble (Heb. 10:25), not because of the sabbath or Lord's day. They are bound by conscience. Each individual must make the highly complex decisions regarding legitimate activities on Sunday.[14]

There is therefore no New Testament case for "blue laws" or other state-enforced restrictions on business activities on Sunday. Other than inside a family, where the head of the household exercises legitimate authority, all institutional enforcement of Mosaic laws governing the sabbath has been annulled, along with the law's mandated civil sanction: execution. The state no longer has any legitimate en-

12. Gary North, *Inheritance and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Deuteronomy*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1999] 2012), ch. 35.

13. Gary North, *Boundaries and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Leviticus*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [1994] 2012), ch. 8.

14. For those Christians who are unfamiliar with the Scottish sabbatarian position, personal conduct on the sabbath may not seem to be a complex issue. This is because they are part of a broad non-sabbatarian tradition, the one adhered to by Calvin. In Calvinistic circles, Calvin's view is referred to as the Continental view of the sabbath.

forcement function in compelling people to honor the sabbath. If it did, it would be biblically compelled to execute the violators.

The strict sabbatarianism of the Scottish Presbyterian tradition has always been theologically schizophrenic: he defends a Mosaic prohibition without its mandated civil sanction. Strict sabbatarianism has always been loose sabbatarianism when compared with Mosaic sabbatarianism.

The strict sabbatarian, like the strict prohibitionist, regards his position as the strong one. Paul dismisses both as weak positions. He taught that the church should not concern itself with either form of enforcement. Both are a matter of conscience. One more time: a law without sanctions is not a law; it is a suggestion. Only at the level of individual conscience should these prohibitions be regarded as biblically legitimate laws.

CONCLUSION

> *Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.*
>
> ROMANS 3:28–31

The deeds required by God's law do not justify fallen man.[1] This means that the work of the law, which is in every man's heart (Rom. 2:14–15),[2] cannot redeem anyone. But neither can the Mosaic law. The Jew, no less than the Greek, is in need of saving faith. "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). Through saving faith, both Jew and Greek are justified by God.

Why should there continue to be strife within the institutional church over the law of God? Paul was asking an important judicial question in this epistle. He recommended ways to end such strife: church courts (I Cor. 6),[3] the acceptance of people's differences (Rom. 13:12–14:13), and the patience of the strong regarding the weak in their mutual Christian liberty (Rom. 14:1–6).[4]

In seeking the basis of cooperation within the church, Paul raised

1. It would be very hard to argue that works did not justify Jesus, whose righteousness is imputed to His people. I think this idea underlies James' affirmation that deeds do justify covenant-keepers "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (James 2:24). These are Jesus' works imputed to men judicially, and predestined before time began: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10).

2. Chapter 3.

3. Gary North, *Judgment and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on First Corinthians*, 2nd ed. (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, [2001] 2012), ch. 6.

4. Chapter 14.

issues of revelation and law that applied to the relations of church members with covenant-breakers. He told church members not to take each other into civil courts run by and for covenant-breakers. He also told them that covenant-breakers cannot escape from God's revelation of Himself and the work of His law. This was a clear statement regarding the principle of natural law: it cannot be fully trusted in civil affairs. Nevertheless, as a matter of epistemology, it can be relied on by political necessity to some limited degree in a covenant-breaking social order, for there are limits on the ability of covenant-breakers to suppress the truth and act contrary to it. This is a blessing of common grace.

This general revelation of God and the work of God's law in every human heart are the biblical epistemological foundations of political and judicial assessments regarding social justice and social utility. Were it not for the image of God in man, including the work of God's law, the methodological individualist could not logically say that civil judges or voters can accurately aggregate individual utilities or values in their attempt to derive both a concept of social utility and a workable application of it to specific cases.

Social cooperation requires a shared discourse. Without this, society would disintegrate in the war of all against all. Original sin and total depravity would undermine society. God's common grace prevents this outcome. This is necessary for the fulfillment of the dominion covenant (Gen. 1:26–28; 9:1–3).[5] Without the division of labor, there could be no fulfillment of the dominion covenant. The command to subdue the earth was given to all men. All men are expected to do their part to fulfill it.

Romans 12 parallels I Corinthians 12. It describes the institutional church as a body. This organic metaphor for an oath-bound covenantal association can be used to make sense of the economy. While the economy is not oath-bound, it is contract-bound. Paul's organic metaphor of the body is superior to mechanical metaphors to describe the auction process that best describes the free market. The ideal of the division of labor applies to the free market, just as it does to the church. There is coordination in society through individual decision-making and contracts. The unity of the church is secured by Christ as its head. There is no head for the economy, for there is no covenantal oath to bind its participants. The market derives its coher-

5. Gary North, *Sovereignty and Dominion: An Economic Commentary on Genesis* (Dallas, Georgia: Point Five Press, 2012), chaps. 3, 4, 18.

ence from the interaction of enforceable contracts. There is justice, however: civil law. This is an oath-bound covenantal organization, and Paul goes so far as to identify it as a ministry (Rom. 13:4). The free market is not autonomous. It is established through innumerable contracts made by owners of property—families, individuals, corporations, partnerships, trusts—who are in turn bound by civil government. There is a court of appeals outside of the free market that can settle the conflicts that are not resolvable, violence-free, within the free market. Paul did not reject the legitimacy of civil courts. He argued only that they are no place for covenant-keepers to settle their disputes. He affirmed their legitimacy in non-ecclesiastical matters.

Paul recommended social cooperation, both inside and outside of the institutional church. His argument for the work of the law in every heart can be used to justify the idea of non-Christian civil government as a default position, but Paul offered no case against theonomy as the civic ideal. It is also the ideal for the church. The church is superior to the state as a source of justice, as he made plain in Romans 6. Its courts are not open to everyone; they are open only to its oath-bound members.

Cooperation is a fact of life. Without the cooperation made possible by the modern division of labor, most people would die. But most men need to believe in something to put their faith in that is higher and more personal than the free market. The same is true for their faith in providence in contrast to the survival of the biologically fittest. They want to believe in cosmic personalism. Paul says that God is sovereign over all (Rom. 9). He is the source of order. He is the source of meaning, too. Man is made in God's image, so man can understand God's providence. But men rebel and worship products of their imagination. God restrains this through His common grace, but false worship and rebellious behavior go together (Rom. 1:18–22).[6]

6. Chapter 2.